WHAT IS TRUTH

I. GREGORY SMITH

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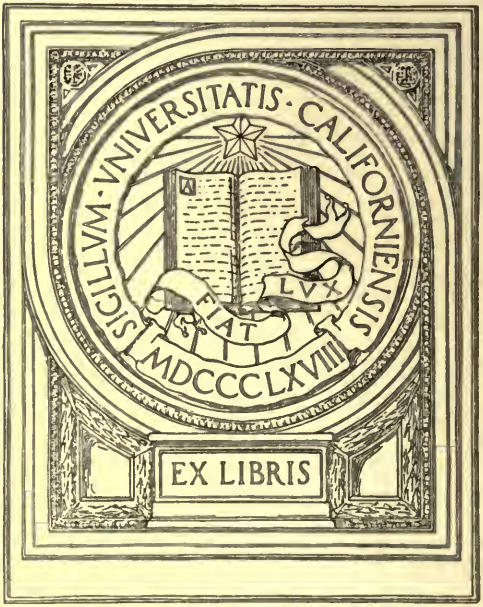

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WHAT IS TRUTH?

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AN ATTEMPT TO ELUCIDATE FIRST PRINCIPLES IN BELIEF

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"FAITH AND PHILOSOPHY," "ARISTOTELIANISM," "CHARACTERISTICS OF CHRISTIAN MORALITY" (THE BAMPTON LECTURES, 1872)
"HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN MONASTICISM," ETC.

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PREFACE

THESE suggestions—they are little more—may perhaps be not without some use to honest seekers after truth in the present day.

It is my aim to enforce some vital principles, which underlie all moral and spiritual questions and which are not always borne in mind. These are, especially, that, as the greatest of psychologists taught long ago, the knowledge attainable by man is only relative, not absolute; that right-being is more than even right-doing; the effort, the energy, more than the thing done; that the motive is what really makes the action right or wrong; and — truths beyond the reach of Aristotle — that religion is based on morality, and that the essence of morality is to be unselfish.

"Chacun de nous" (Souvestre) "rassemble au vieux systéme de Ptolemée et veut que l'univers entier tourn' autour de lui." And yet

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there is a latent, irrepressible consciousness, which asserts itself in our saner moments, that pure unselfishness is, after all, not merely the thing most to be loved, but the strongest force in the world. So far as results, if discerned clearly, go, the selfish theory of virtue, the theory in vogue during the Eighteenth Century, that virtue is regulated self-love, coincides with the unselfish; *e.g.*, "Honesty is the best policy": but the one is diametrically opposed to the other in motive.

There is no need for the present purpose to have recourse to Ontology. The conclusions of Transcendental Metaphysic are and ever must be very precarious. The "Humanistic" aspect of philosophy brings philosophy more into touch with life and character.

As far as possible, I have avoided a technical phraseology. The term "reason" is used here, not in a Kantian sense, but simply as equivalent to intellect.

It was said of Sion in the old time, "Her foundations shall be cast down." This can never befall the spiritual Sion, for it is founded "upon the Rock." But Christians must not be forgetful of the foundations of their hopes, lest their Christianity degenerate into a tepid, conventional assent to stereotyped traditions. More than

others at the present time, Bishop Gore has done a great service for all who love the truth, in probing deep problems to their first principles. It is a Pascal that is needed—insight, not mere erudition. *Exoriare aliquis!*"

I. Gregory Smith.

Horsell, Woking,
February, 1905.

My thanks are due to the Editors of *The XIXth Century*, *The Guardian*, and other periodicals, and to the Editorial Secretary of the S.P.C.K., for leave to use essays published by me under their auspices.

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INTRODUCTION

"The establishment of rules of right and wrong on a scientific basis is a pressing need."

—HERBERT SPENCER.

THE landscape seen in twilight wears a strangely different appearance when scanned in the broad light of day. The friend, whom one knows familiarly, stands out in a new aspect under the stress of an extraordinary crisis. Yet landscape and friend are the same as they were: the change is not in them, but in the observer's standpoint.

Believers in Christianity, as well as unbelievers, are sometimes startled when it presents itself to them in a new light, the standpoint for observation having been shifted in course of time. Surely this is indeed one of the vouchers for the truth of Christianity, this manysidedness, this power of adapting itself to the varying phases of the life of man. In every age the

Christian Faith appeals to man's reason;* but the character of this reasonableness varies. St Paul, Augustine of Hippo, and Christian Apologists generally, in the early centuries appealed to Jew and Gentile on ethical grounds mainly. "The Gospel comes from heaven," they urged, "because it is light and healing for the sorrows and sins of men." When barbarism swept like a flood over the ruins of Roman civilisation, the Church asserted her authority over the chaos and confusion, and for centuries the ultimate appeal was simply to the authority of the Church. The revolt of Northern Europe against Rome in the sixteenth century substituted the authority of Scripture for the authority of the Church. Later developments of thought and knowledge drive back the believer in Christ to the bedrock of his faith, the surest credential of it, the truths of morality. More and more, as the years go on, men recognise that, when all has been said for and against Christianity, the ultimate question is, the practical bearing of it on life and conduct. "The beauty of holiness" incarnate in the Person of Jesus

* See Illingworth's profound and eloquent *Reason and Revelation,* Chapter I. I had not seen his books, till this, my own, was finished.

Christ, in His teaching, life, death, resurrection, ascension, is the Rock on which the Church is built; this is the real essence * of Christianity.

In every clause of the creeds of Christianity, there is a moral and spiritual meaning behind the historic fact. To accept the bare historic fact only (or primarily) is not the "faith that overcomes the world," that transforms and transfigures the character. If there were no righteousness in the dogma, where would be sin in rejecting it? Might not the requirement of its acceptance be deemed arbitrary and capricious? A Christian believes what would otherwise be incredible, because it is related of One whose absolute self-devotion prepares us to believe Him to be God the Son incarnate. There must be a willingness to trust and love this unique goodness; there must be an appreciative sympathy with it and veneration for it.†

As the individual, so should the community grow "in stature and wisdom," even as on earth

* "Das Wesen"—Harnack.

† It is noticeable, in the Ministry of Christ on earth, that the practical precepts on the Mount precede the dogmas of theology.

He grew, "the Author and Finisher" of all that is of any worth in man. It is well to recognise distinctly, that religion is based on morality; that the Kingdom of Christ is essentially "a kingdom of righteousness"; that Christianity, while confirming, enhancing the sense of moral rectitude, and while alone able to impart fully the capacity for it, still looks to conscience as to the supreme court of appeal for the guarantee and sanction of this authority. Men have sought and seek in vain from Pope or Book an infallible guidance, such as may relieve them of the responsibility of affirming or denying for themselves. But conscience speaks imperatively,* if free to speak, to all, learned and unlearned, who will give ear.

The paramount considerations to be kept in view are these:—

Morality is the only sure footing for man with quicksands under his feet. If we except pure mathematic, a science without any practical influence on life and character, not touching them on any side, what kind of knowledge can he grasp for certain? In physic, metaphysic, art, history, everywhere the assurance of to-day

* Kant's "Categorical Imperative." *Cf.* Leibnitz, "sceptical otherwise, but on morality dogmatic."

is apt to be rudely shaken by the experience of to-morrow, in the perpetual ebb and * flow of opinion. But that there is a right and a wrong in everything done, said, thought, wished, willed, is no ephemeral opinion, but a conviction deeply rooted in man; not indeed, universally admitted (for it is impossible to find any truth beyond the range of numerals admitted universally), but attested generally by the adhesion and concurrence of the nations and the individuals most † qualified to judge, most entitled to deference. If a more complete, a more irresistible, consent than this could be attained, our life on earth would cease to be the probation that it is. Comparatively with other departments of knowledge, morality affords the surest footing.

Again, as morality is the surest criterion of the truth of a creed, so it is the only real criterion of sincerity in those who profess the creed. Faith (it cannot be repeated too often) is not the mechanical assent of the intellect to certain doctrines, as if the articles of the Creed were propositions of Euclid. Were it so, a clever, cultured intellect would have an unfair

* "πάντα ῥεῖ"—Heraclitus.

† Οἱ σπουδάιος, οἱ πεπαιδευμένοι—Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomach.*

advantage over others less fortunate. Faith is practical, not theoretical merely. It is the trustful, loving surrender of the Will, the Intention, the Self to Christ, because He is holy and merciful. "I know," says the Apostle, "in whom I have believed." Just as duty involves the conception of some one to whom the debt, the obligation is due, so faith implies a person worthy to be trusted. The two essential qualifications for being trusted are, as Aristotle has said, willingness and ability to help. That Christ is able and willing to save men from their baser selves, is recorded not only in the pages of the New Testament, but in the experience of the innumerable believers, who have found Him trustworthy.

Faith is no hysterical ebullition of sentiment, such as comes and goes, evaporating in air, leaving no permanent trace behind it. Faith, unless it obeys, is a name only, not a reality. Emotion may supply the impulse, but reason guides the choice, when the Will consents to believe.

"If ye love Me, keep My commandments."

It is deeply interesting to notice how the onward march of science coincides with this shifting of the standpoint, from which to estimate

Christianity. A clearer psychology is a great help to the right understanding of the ethical principles, on which Christianity rests. The study of psychology indicates more and more clearly, how powerful an influence is exercised by the material part of man's being over the spirit* within him, which is his very self, and how his thought and emotion move, to say the least, on lines parallel to his physical organisation. But, after all, Determinism cannot show that the Will of man is a mere slave, spellbound by the determining forces which surround it. Were that so, there would be an end to aspirations, religious or moral. Very potent, and at times almost overwhelming, may be these forces extraneous to the Will; yet it is the man himself, not his environment, that has the inalienable responsibility of saying the final "Yes" or "No," of pronouncing the decisive "Fiat."

The reasonableness of the Christian's faith shines out most unequivocally, when it is clearly understood what are the composite parts of man's nature, and how they work together; in short, what he is made of. There is no need to invent a new faculty, a "spiritual sense" for

* "Divinæ particula auræ."—Horat.

apprehending things spiritual. It is unreasonable to imagine other faculties, perceptive or conceptive, acting independently of the reason, that is, of the intellect or intelligence. The rational faculties, inherent in sane persons, if prompted by purified emotions and directed by a Will devoting itself to God, are equipment enough, supposing the temperament to be such as makes a mystic, for soaring to heights trodden by Sister Therèsa and other devotees. A good child, a pious peasant, has really a share in this blissful communion with heaven. In their prayers and praises they have a vision of the unseen identical in kind with the visions of the ascetic. The difference is only in degree.

But, and this is the main thing, the Evangelic precepts of self-sacrifice for God and for our fellows must be kept more steadily in view than they are ordinarily by Christians. These precepts are not to be explained away by smooth conventionalities. In spirit * they must be put into practice all round. Self-love must be exorcised so far as it conflicts with the love due to God and to others. If Christians would really live up to the "Sermon on the Mount," if they

* The moral essentiality of the *Intention* is the key to the right understanding of these seemingly "hard sayings."

would realise by self-denial in daily life, as Christians did in the beginning, the fatherhood of God in Christ, the brotherhood in Christ of mankind, it would be the rejuvenescence of the world.

WHAT IS TRUTH?

CHAPTER I

THE FREEDOM OF THE WILL

"The metaphysics of one age become the ethics of the next."—S. T. COLERIDGE.

"In our flesh grows the branch of this life, in our soul it bears fruit."—BROWNING.

"MIND and Body": "Mind and Matter":—these are phrases of long standing. Because the mind operates invisibly, because mental processes seem, superficially, to be independent of material causes, because, in brief, thoughts cannot be measured nor weighed, therefore it has too often been taken for granted, that mind and matter move in spheres separated the one with the other. But this assumption is undermined by the discoveries of physical science. More and more it becomes evident, that our thoughts as well as our emotions depend very largely on the

organism of the body; that they trace their origin to the circumstances which elicit and suggest them; that they follow one another across the retina of our consciousness with the mechanical punctuality of the tickings of a clock or the pulsations of a steam engine.

Does this mean that man is a machine merely? Or is there a driver, and is that driver the man's real Self? Surely this is the question of questions for everyone who thinks at all. Are we free agents, or are we merely motor cars very ingeniously put together? If machines and nothing more, there can be no use any longer in trying to steer in any direction; better far it would be to face the fact and succumb to it. Duty and glory, the watchwords severally of England and France, have no longer any significance, or, at most, only so much as a vivid dream. If I am simply the creature of my surroundings, if I really cannot help myself, why should I try? Why waste time and trouble on a vain and fruitless endeavour? If we are swayed solely and entirely by the operation of agencies working with the ruthless regularity of a cleverly constructed engine, we are doomed to drift onward, like a log, whether the stream on which we float is bearing us to joy or sorrow, weal or woe: and if things in our life

here seem hopelessly adverse, nothing is left for us but hellebore or mandragora.

For the immediate purpose the question is not, "What says Revelation as to the freedom of man's Will,"—about that there can be no doubt—but only, "What says Reason unaided by Revelation?" And if the answer shall be, that the Will, the true Self, is free to accept or to refuse what the intellect, prompted by the emotions, suggests, still it must never be forgotten that these forces, external to the Will yet closely associated with it, can put a tremendous pressure on it for good or for evil. It is only when he claims for them the final determination that the determinist oversteps the line.

The only sure method of philosophy, whatever may be the subject, is the inductive method, which the patient seeker after truth pursues in his laboratory. He tries suppositions one after another till he finds the one which reconciles in itself all the jarring facts to be taken account of. He lays aside as useless key after key, till one fits all the wards of the lock; but he tries each key in the belief for the moment that it is the right one. So far surely the Positivist is not wrong. In this spirit the question of Free Will or Determinism must be handled.

If the Will is only the result and product of causes which can be gauged, it will not be impossible to calculate beforehand what this result will be in any particular instance. Given, in the case of any person, the intellectual and emotive character, together with the external circumstances, the action, if there can be no interference from the Will, follows inevitably as a matter of calculation. The sum may be difficult, but it is not impossible. Given a knowledge of the laws which regulate cerebration, emotion, etc., as well as of the amount and tendency of the pressure on these from without, you shall be able to estimate adequately, if Will is eliminated, what anyone shall do in any contingency. Is this so actually? The contrary is notorious. The wisest people do at times the most foolish things; the fool surprises those who know him by rising above the occasion; the prudent man upsets all his antecedents by a freakish indiscretion; those who are apt to yield evince unlooked-for obstinacy; natures timid and shrinking act heroically; the strong-minded and fearless betray irresolution. Gauge ever so accurately the temperament of your adversary in a campaign or in a game of chess, and the motives most apt to sway him, still you cannot

predict absolutely what he will choose to do. The scales are duly poised, the preponderance this way or that way seems unquestionable; but, after all, if the Will throws itself, as Brennus threw his sword, into the lighter scale, the heavier kicks the beam. As the "wind blows where it lists," so is the human Will, the spirit of man, volatile and capricious. It may permit itself to be swayed hither and thither by the forces extraneous to itself, just as the Czar of all the Russias is hampered by the camarilla round him, and yet, all the time, like the Czar (unless it abdicates), it is an entity with a function of its own. Doubtless, the Will of man, like all the universe, spiritual as well as material, is obedient to laws. But what those laws are, who can say?

Again, if the Will is merely a part of the mechanism of the body, and therefore acts mechanically, when motives equally cogent are urging it from opposite sides, the result of these conflicting pressures must be to do nothing at all. Two billiard balls driven with equal force from opposite sides of the table, and meeting half way, become motionless by the collision. Similarly (unless there is indeed a something in man distinct from his other organisation), when

motives are equally balanced, he will move neither in one direction nor in the other; he must, like the fabled ass between bundles of hay, the one as attractive as the other, die of inanition. It is not so; however difficult may be the choice, man makes it. The tippler sees on one side of the road the bright, warm tap-room; on the other, his wife and children waiting for him in his home; and though he pauses for a moment, drawn hither and thither by the conflict within him, he chooses home or the drink-shop at last.

How is it, again, that strength of Will seems as a fact to be altogether separable from strength either of the intellect or the affections? A strong Will can co-exist with a feeble intellect, with weak passions: there may be (as in dear Hartley Coleridge) high intellectuality and a lovable disposition with lamentable weakness of Will. If the Will is merely a reflex of what is going on in the body, how can this be explained? Can any theory which denies the freedom of Will account satisfactorily for this phenomenon.*

Again, if the Will moves mechanically, how are Remorse and Self-gratulation to be accounted

* There is a wide difference between *wishing* and *willing*, says Cardinal Retz, speaking of a Duc d'Orleans.

for? A watch that goes well is not elated thereby; nor is it depressed because of losing or gaining. But human beings, however stoically inclined, however apathetic, are apt continually to praise or blame themselves when they review their past. If anyone will take the trouble to analyse carefully the regrets which at times torment him, he will find that the real source of his vexation is, because, with all his trying, he cannot succeed in "white-washing" himself, in justifying to himself his own share in what has annoyed him, the part which he himself has played in the affair. Nor can it be denied, that when you look back with a glow of satisfaction on what has taken place, you are sensible to the flattering thought, that you did well. What does all this mean, if what you did you were absolutely doing in chains?

Once more—Take such a quality as courage. The poet says wisely:—

> "The brave man is not he who feels no fear,
> For that were stupid and irrational."

On the contrary, the truly brave are they who, like the hero in the story,* conquer their fears, who see clearly enough the danger, realise all

* *The Four Feathers.*

that it involves, shrink from it naturally, and yet control all this and keep it down. What is it that controls their apprehensions and enables them to keep down the instinctive repugnance to pain? Some selfish motive, it may be replied, dislike of being blamed and disgraced (for instance), counteracting and outweighing the physical dislike to pain. But if the motive, which nerves the arm, is purely unselfish, the hope of defending, of saving another, to what ingredients in the physical composition of man's nature can this be referred? Can this be resolved into the action of chemical affinities? Anyhow, there is a deliberate act of choice.

In short, all else that the Determinist contends for, may and must in fairness be conceded, if only he stops short of the ultimate decision. Almost overpowering, nay, in some extraordinary occasions, quite overpowering, may be the pressure on the Will of imaginations, called up by the senses and intensified by the passions; still, after all, the final "yes" or "no" is the man himself. It is noteworthy that the keenest of all analysts of human nature, whose delineation of the exquisitely complex elements of man's nature can never really be superseded,

makes the supreme act of volition * the main thing, in his psychology, although he never names the Will.

Apart from this decisiveness of the Will, can the rest of man's organism be resolved into what is merely material? There is no occasion for philosophy of the impalpable cloudland, where time and space are not; no need even of the Kantian distinction between Reason and Understanding. It is a question rather for accurate observation than for subtle theories; the psychology of Locke † is more helpful than that of Hegel. Let any thoughtful person trace back his mental or emotional development so far as he can to its source; stripping off whatever is adventitious; analysing the processes of thought and emotion into their simplest elements. He will not find there any trace of "innate ideas," true or false, only a capacity (coincident with the perception of self and non-self) of perceiving likeness or unlikeness, and a capacity of being drawn to or repelled by what he likes or dislikes. "This is that—

* ἡ προαίρεσις, *Ethica Nicomach.* *Cf.* Illingworth's *Reason and Revelation,* pp. 79, 81.

† Perhaps the "obsolete" philosophy, as Dr Illingworth terms it, of Locke, may outlive the elusive theories, which confound the percipient with the theory perceived.

This is not that"—these are the embryo of all the complex reasonings ever evolved by the wit of man. "This I like—This I dislike"—here is the initial stage of all that war of passions, which produces what we mean by "character." The intellect by itself, as Aristotle has said, "moves nothing." It supplies the food which the emotive tendrils clutch at or push away. And this material for the emotions to feed upon the intellect takes in primarily through sensation. Abstract reasonings, however abstruse, all have their origin here; their generalisations are, after all, the product of what the senses reported from the outer world about things one by one. The appetites are sublimated by experience into desire, touch into thought. From the first scene to the last, till the life-drama is played out, the intellect, at the prompting of the emotions, writes down its day-by-day record on what was at first a "clean white page." To the Will is reserved the judicial responsibility of admitting or excluding the paragraph, of retaining it or blotting it out for ever.

No one who watches the onward progress of physical science will refuse to admit that the dependence of thought and emotion on the material organism, if not yet completely demon-

strated, is far on the way to be. Roughly speaking, the throbs of the brain, the beatings of the heart, the quiverings of the nerves, dominate these processes. Anyone can see that his moods vary according to his digestion, the pace of the blood in his veins, and other similar causes; science day by day explains more and more certainly the "how" of these things. The succession of ideas obeys a mechanical law of association; and, though the word "mechanical" may seem out of place if applied to what is so quick to change as an emotion, yet here too can be detected, by careful observation, a close and intimate dependence of our likings and mislikings on the temperament of the body *till the Ego intervenes.* Was Sir Walter Raleigh altogether wrong in the cynical lines which he penned in prison, his cry of resentment against an unsympathetic world? Was Carlyle wrong in making the stomach a factor in what we think and feel? Even on the surface are obvious instances of materiality in the genesis of thoughts and emotions. Unconscious cerebration suggests how the wheels are busily revolving in the workshop, even while the workman is unaware of it. The lawyer or the scientist puts aside some hard problem to be

reconsidered by and by; and when he takes it up again, he finds that without any conscious complicity on his part, his mind has been at work and has disentangled the knot. Perhaps what looks at present inexplicable in telepathy may some day be explained by physical laws akin to those which govern wireless telegraphy. Unaccountable aversions and prepossessions are another exemplification of this mechanical procedure. To call them "instinctive" is no sufficient answer. They come from temperament, and temperament is the result of what goes on in the body. Take, again, Heredity. What has been ascertained inductively about hereditary tendencies can be reconciled with our traditional beliefs as to right and wrong, only if the moral responsibility of each person is for the right exercise of the Will.

But it may be replied, Are we then to think of Shakespeare's Plays and Pascal's *Pensées* as merely the product of a happy predisposition in his bodily equipment, a certain physical conformation in the man? Napoleon's strategy and statesmanship, were they due simply and solely to a peculiarly shaped brain, in combination with good digestion, healthy circulation of the blood,

etc.?* That would be to exalt the machinery into a sphere which does not belong to it—as if the motor-car could guide itself without the guiding hand of the driver. There may be in a man (it is a truism which daily experience confirms) the ability, which is a pre-requisite for great achievement as well as the eager desire to achieve, but unless the Will gives the word of command articulate and resonant, nothing comes of it all. There must be the resolution, the *labor improbus*, the strenuous effort which nothing daunts. What is this but the word, which the Will utters, and which must be obeyed at all costs? *Sic volo, sic jubeo.*

It may be asked, if the personality of a man is not his mind, nor his emotions, but his volition, and if his affections as well as his thoughts are only a temporary adjunct of the real self; is, therefore, the ideal self independent of them? In a final stage of development, is the human being conceivable without thought, without affection? The question comes from a confusion of knowing with the laborious and tedious

* The definition of Genius as "an infinite capacity for taking pains" puts the result as the cause. Genius is the predisposition, the "bent" in this or that direction, impelling to infinite pains in that direction.

process of reasoning, a confusion of love with passion. Wordsworth (in *Laodamia*) is wiser :—

> "He spake of love, such love as spirits feel,
> In worlds whose course is equable and pure;
> No fears to beat away, no strife to heal,
> The past unsighed for, and the future sure;—
> Worlds which the sun, which sheds the brightest ray
> Earth knows, is all unworthy to survey."

Passion may add fuel to the flame; but the flame itself, the pure perennial flame of Love, is in the Will, sacrificing Self for another. To work out a difficult problem by the ingenuity and perseverance of the reasoning faculties, like the delight of hunting, enhances the joy of knowing, as man is constituted now; but it is transient and accidental; it is only the enjoyment which a skilful artisan has in using clever tools.

Of course the Will is itself shaped and coloured by its corporeal environment; this contact is indeed the discipline, the probation of life to every one. The Will becomes day by day better or worse, by assenting to the impulses, good or evil, which press upon it; and at the last the man himself is what he is, good or bad, great or inglorious, foul or beautiful, in short, selfish or unselfish, according to good or bad influences which he has chosen to assent to.

They grow into him, they become a part of him. Of course, influences even more extraneous than these must be taken into account. The circumstances of a man's life, the events, the personages in it, cannot but tell for good or for evil on the man himself. Often there is in these as in the disposition which any one is born with an amount of excuse for aberration, which Omniscience alone can estimate rightly. Exceptional lives there are, unquestionably, which seem like a driverless steam-engine, obedient only to the hand of the pointsman. Still, after making full allowance for exceptions, the Will is arbiter of each man's destiny, if not outward success, but the inward perfecting of Self is the thing aimed at: and the inherent weakness of man's Will can be made strength by the divine Spirit co-operating, Spirit with spirit.

It is hardly possible to form any conception, consistent with equity, of a future existence, if the mental and emotional equipment allotted to him in this life is to remain an integral part of a man's personality for ever. Those who are ill-equipped at present would of necessity be handicapped in the life to come. But if these things are only the furniture of the house, not the indweller, only the apparel which the man

wears for a time, not the man himself, this unfairness vanishes. The naturally stupid person who is true to his responsibilities, or the person naturally ill-disposed, who conquers his faults, stands on the same level as he who starts in the race endowed with qualities amiable and brilliant. Like the bodily sensations, whence they have "their birth and their beginning," the mental and emotional elements in man's being will be no longer needed, when they have done their part in the chiselling of the Self. Those who believe that a Power unseen deigns to co-operate with man in his strivings after perfections, can realise that this is the action of Spirit on spirit; the spirit which is in man, his very Self, yielding itself to the guidance of the divine Influence, so that the man may guide rightly the various faculties of his being. The old saying of Descartes, "*Cogito, ergo sum,*" surely should rather be "*Volo, ergo sum.*" After all, Intention, in the true sense of the word, is everything.*

* These psychologic questions are discussed more fully in my *Aristotelianism* (S.P.C.K.), and in my *Characteristics of Christian Morality* (Parker). M. Taine, following Hobbes, could not have denied the possibility of a scientific study of Psychology so long as the Will is supposed to be free, if he had distinguished the operation, seemingly lawless, of the Will from the mechanical operation of Thought and Emotion.

CHAPTER II

BELIEF AND CONDUCT

"Belief or Unbelief
Bears upon life, determines its whole course,
Begins at the beginning."

—BROWNING.

IN considering the relation of Christianity to morality, it is well to preclude *in limine* some grave misrepresentations. A Gospel, which, if it means anything, is in its very essence strict and exacting in its moral precepts, not only as to deeds and words but also as to secret thoughts and wishes, has been accused of encouraging laxity and vice, because it encourages sinners to repent and be forgiven.* A Gospel, which heralds peace and forgiveness, and which, whatever else it may be said to omit, certainly lays a paramount stress on inward holiness of intention, has been described †

* *Supernatural Religion.*

† *XIXth Century,* cxxxiv. (Sir Leslie Stephen). See also subsequent quotations.

as "bullying men to act as if they were good." The God of the Christian is spoken of as a "jealous, arbitrary, revengeful tyrant, to be pacified or enraged by mysterious charms," as "taking sheer pleasure in the torment of a sinner," as "exacting a savage and vindictive punishment." That which in the New Testament is a subordinate motive, a counterweight to the terribly alluring seductions of vice, a help towards realising the greatness of the deliverance, is made to be the very core of the evangelic teaching; as if it were the main message of the Gospel, that "all sins lead to infinite sufferings." The self-sacrifice on the Cross, and the love which prompted the guiltless One to identify Himself with the guilty, are summed up in a stereotyped phrase about "God punishing the innocent." Surely this cannot seriously be accepted as an adequate description of Christianity. It is a travesty, a caricature.

It is surprising, also, to find from a writer of high calibre the assertion which, whatever may have been the errors of theologians, it would not be easy to substantiate even from the testimony of historians inimical to Christianity, that "theology has been opposed to the innovations which contain all possible germs of improvement."

And it really seems as if a clever man may be conversant with other subjects, and yet be unconscious of what is going on in regard to religion, when in an age notoriously prolific of religious sects and of religious controversies we read that "the creeds of to-day are not vigorous enough to throw off heretical branches" (p. 372); and that "the most intelligent part of the world has ceased to believe."

Again, and this is of scarcely less importance, it is surely a misstatement of the whole question, to speak as if believers in Christianity claim, that the truth of what they believe can be demonstrated, as if "the demonstrable truth of a religion" were possible, as if the correctness of faith in unseen verities could be proved with the precision of a problem in mathematics. A Christian is represented as saying, "I am absolutely certain that the ultimate cause (of things) is the existence of a Being, of whom I know nothing; it should be, "I have reason sufficient practically for believing (not for being scientifically certain) in the existence of a Being, of whom I know all that I need know for this life."

On the questions more particularly of the relation of religion to morality, there is often the

same apparent inability to appreciate the real standpoint of advocates of Christianity. They are represented as affirming that "morality is caused by a belief in Christianity"; that "morality dropped from the clouds about 1800 years ago"; that "morality is the product of a particular creed"; that "Christianity is the ultimate cause of goodwill towards mankind."

This is to attach an exaggerated meaning to the dependence of morality upon religion. Rather, to say that morality depends upon religion, means not only that, speaking generally, morality finds in true religion the support and the sanction which are needed, but that (as even adversaries must allow) morality is elevated, purified, ennobled by the teaching of Christianity.*

The creed does not create the consciousness of a distinction between right and wrong, but it enlightens and develops it. It brings out clearly and fully the characters traced, as it were, in invisible ink; it emphasises and expands man's surmisings about duty and God. In this sense it may fairly be maintained that morality depends upon theology.

The converse of the proposition is true.

* "Altruism" is the foster-child, though sometimes unconsciously, of Christianity.

Religion depends upon morality, inasmuch as the strongest appeal which religion makes is an appeal to the enlightened conscience of mankind. Nor is this a "vicious circle of argument," for where the subject-matter is hypothetical and experimental, there must of necessity be recourse to what is nothing more nor less than a mutual corroboration. After all, for practical purposes, if the ethical excellence of Christianity is granted, there is a probability of the dogma being true as well as the precept. To a certain degree this is admitted. "The fact that a creed has long satisfied the intellectual and moral wants of mankind, is a conclusive proof that it has some value," and may serve as a "verification." It would seem to follow that if the ethics of Christianity are unique in their excellence, the creed of which they are an integral part holds a position, which is unique in its claim to be believed.

But it is argued (and paradoxical as it may sound, it is not an argument to be dismissed lightly) that the moral excellence of a religion may, from one point of view, become an argument against the credibility of that religion. "The reasonableness of a belief" may be regarded as that which accounts for its existence. In one sense this is indisputable. "The wish is often

father of the thought;" and if a religion merely formulates what people are ready to acknowledge without its aid, it brings no credentials of this kind worth noticing. But is it so in regard to Christianity? Theologians, it is true, insist on the suitability of the Gospel to the circumstances in which it appeared, that it "was adapted to the various wants of the time." But before proceeding to infer that the Gospel was therefore merely the product of the age, it is to be observed that the Gospel was, without question, on many points of great importance diametrically antagonistic to the age in which it made its appearance. It came sympathising tenderly and profoundly with the needs of humanity, but as every student of history knows, it confronted the inveterate prejudices and prepossessions of the world without fear and without favour. It pandered to no selfishness in high nor low. Generally, indeed, "the quality produces the institution" as much as the "institution the quality"; but in the advent of Christianity the antecedents are wanting which could produce it. No theory of evolution can explain the origin and growth of Christianity, if the character of its surroundings is counted in.

To infer from the moral loveliness of a creed that the creed is true, is not to say that we

ought to accept the creed whether true or false. We must not believe because we wish it. The advocates of Christianity are accused of this sophism. "The old creed," the advocates of Christianity are made to say, "whether true or false, is so beautiful, so consoling, so edifying, that a world from which it had decayed would be intolerable.

No one who cares for truth would try to prop up Christianity in this way. The conscience would be killed by the very effort to save it. "A lie as to my religious belief, though dictated by amiable motives, is a lie." "Pious frauds" are abominable. But all this involves a misapprehension. Christians say not, The results of Christianity are so beautiful that we will hold it fast whether truth or fiction; but, The results of Christianity confirm our faith that Christianity is true.

The real question underlying all other questions about belief and conduct, is briefly this, Why do we, who call ourselves Christians, believe as we do? "Right belief," it is said rightly, "is determined by a clear perception of facts." What, then, are the facts on which the belief in Christianity rests? Why do Christians believe in Christianity?

The very name supplies the answer, too often missed. Because we trust Him who is the Christ. Too often in controversies about Christianity this seems to be lost sight of. And yet, everything really turns on this. Have we or have we not reason for trusting Him whose life on earth, death, resurrection, and ascension are recorded in the Bible? The Christian answers, Yes; because there never has been one like Him, nor can be, perfect in holiness.* If I can eliminate sin from my calculations; if there is no such thing in the world as sin, or if I do not care whether there is or not; if there is any other than Christ who can help me as effectually to overcome evil with good in myself, in others; then the argument for me is worth nothing. But if I really long, as did Saul of Tarsus, to conquer this baneful influence corroding, destroying all that is fair and good, and if I cannot find elsewhere what I want to make me able, then the argument draws me to the Christ irresistibly. Difficulties, perplexities, mysteries, there will be still, such as are inherent in a limited intelligence environed by almost limitless experiences, the existence of

* Apart from all external evidences of the veracity of the Gospel narrative, there is the improbability, or rather impossibility, of a character such as the Character of Christ having been invented.

evil, the compatibility of man's free will with God's omnipotence, and so forth.* But just as men trust a friend, proved a friend, so they trust Christ; and because they trust Him, they accept all that emanates from Him, doctrine and precept, and they are Christians. Other evidences may be subsidiary, but the question, Christian or infidel, must turn on this—Is Christ Jesus worthy or not of credence?

* What is called "Natural Religion" can at best only make guesses at problems about God, the soul, immortality; and the attempt to draw from nature a scientific answer to such questionings is futile. But, credence once given to Christ, the answer is provided from His lips.

CHAPTER III

MODERN SCEPTICISM

"What think ye of Christ?"

"The truth of the Gospel is more widely doubted in Europe than at any time since the conversion of Constantine." A statement like this claims attention, especially if it come, not from an avowed assailant, but from an apparently friendly quarter; it is a note of warning not to be disregarded by those whose post exposes them to the first shock of the assaults of infidelity. It is their duty patiently to take into account the obstacles which lie in the way of a right belief, and diligently to remove them by solving, to the best of their power, the perplexities of the age reasonably and with candour.

Nor is the statement devoid of truth. No one conversant even slightly with the present literature of England or of Europe can fail to be

aware how largely it is imbued with a spirit of scepticism. The counter-statement is indeed equally true; or, rather, the half-truth requires to be complemented from another point of view. Never since the days of Constantine was the Christian faith held with a more intelligent appreciation, with a more matured and deliberate conviction; for doubt is the probation of belief. Still, it remains unquestionable, that Christianity is now undergoing a keener trial that any recorded in its history, a strain on its powers of endurance far more severe than ever it experienced from the persecutions of Roman emperors, or even from the subtle questionings of Eastern theosophies. The fact in itself is nothing to excite surprise. Those who observe the connection of cause and affect are prepared to see, as the inevitable consequence of advancing civilisation, less of ready acquiescence in received truths, more of inquisitive research into the reasons for believing. The change is in part intellectual, a result of the advance of inductive knowledge, by which a habit is engendered of appealing from the decisions of the past even in matters which are really untouched by the progress of physical science; in part moral (and in that respect a change for the worse), a result

of the self-indulgence and self-confidence which are fostered by civilisation, and which alike shrink from the stern denial of self exacted by the doctrines of the Cross. Such a state of things is accepted by the devout Christian as one of the successive dispensations of Providence, slowly sifting and perfecting the world for the coming of its Lord; and he recognises the fulfilment of a Divine promise in the intenser conflict between good and evil which marks the close of the era.

The emphatic words which have been quoted on the prevalence of scepticism occur in an Essay which has attracted general notice, not only by its ability, but as indicating the tendencies of thought in this day. Certain difficulties are alleged in the received account of the origin of the three first Gospels; and an answer is imperatively demanded on behalf of the laity from those whose province is the study of theology. The object of these pages is not so much to attempt an answer in detail to the objections which are raised, as to show that, whether valid or not, they are not really of such moment as may appear at first sight. A complete investigation of these and similar points may well be left for more elaborate treatises. Meanwhile, it may be of

service to the cause of truth to show that, even after conceding for the sake of the argument far more than need fairly be conceded, the faith of the Christian Church stands unimpaired, unshaken, and unaffected by the controversy.

In these days every thinking person, whether among the laity or clergy, is irresistibly forced to ask himself, "Why do I believe?" It is of the utmost importance that this question be answered rightly. Those who see clearly what the foundation of their Christian faith really is, and how indissolubly the whole superstructure, from base to pinnacle, coheres together, will be comparatively indifferent to controversies, whether about the Old or even the New Testament, which complicate the question, but are really extraneous to it. The prayer of Ajax for light which may dispel the rolling clouds of scepticism is felt, if not uttered, by many thinkers. There would not be so many who believe in Christianity with only a timid, partial, dubious belief, or who, as Carlyle has expressed it, "only believe that they believe"—not so many who are panic-stricken whenever a new theory of scepticism starts into existence, if the great essentials of the faith were grasped more firmly. There would be no need of new "Declarations of Faith," nor of

new definitions of mysteries, if the ancient creeds were appreciated as they ought to be. Those who are content to hold fast the truth as it comes from Christ and His Apostles, preserved in the formularies of the Church Catholic, not as fossil-remains but in all the freshness of vitality, need not be alarmed though the waves of controversy surge high round them, for they stand on a rock, "and that rock is Christ." In the great fact of the Incarnation, involving as it does the other articles of the Creed, they have a sure foundation which cannot be moved, under their feet, even though the ground on every side round them heave and quake with convulsive throes.

Before considering the objections which "modern criticism" arrays against the received authorship of the synoptical Gospels, it is important to note the influence of ideas, now widely prevalent, which prejudice the mind against an impartial hearing of the case on its own merits. Faith and Reason are spoken of, not for the first time, as in direct if not violent opposition, as antagonistic to each other. They are opposed not only as abstract qualities, but practically, as respectively characterising separate

classes of persons. By a broad and arbitrary streak of demarcation, some periods in history are distinguished as "ages of faith"; while our own, it is implied, is, as the infidels of the eighteenth century called it, the "Age of reason." Similarly, while persons of strong intellect are grouped together on the side of reason, weaker or less mature minds, as those of women and children, are relegated to that of faith. Accordingly, a presumption is raised that in this scientific age reason will demolish what faith has constructed in the past.

There is a great fallacy, and more than one, in such a mode of reasoning. Reason and faith are indeed distinct actions of the mind; but, far from being contradictory, they are invariably co-existent and inseparably connected. The act of assent, by which the mind embraces any statement proposed for its acceptance, is indeed posterior in time to the act of reasoning; but it necessarily presupposes the preliminary process to have been performed, more or less correctly. Belief, it matters not whether of spiritual mysteries, of material science, or of the most trivial matters in daily life, there cannot be, except in consequence of reasons sufficient to approve themselves, whether rightly or not, to

the judgment which pronounces on them. These reasons may be derived from many sources: from the senses, from inductive or deductive processes of thought, from authority; or from more than one of these sources: the chain of argument which connects the first and last link in the chain may be concise or lengthy, direct or tortuous, compactly welded or insecure and inconsecutive, logically sound or full of flaws, but some reasons for belief, and those of sufficient weight to turn the scale of judgment, there are and must be in every instance. In spiritual questions the faith of St Paul or of Pascal is as truly belief as that of the child; it rests on a similar foundation, on reasonings deeper and wider, but not more conclusive to the person concerned. The belief of Huxley and of a ploughboy in anything which belongs to the material world is the same act of assent in both, and in both depends on a process of reasoning, although that process may be far more scientific in the one case than in the other. This co-operation of reason and faith is not only invariable, but incessant and continual: for belief is the attitude into which the mind falls naturally, the only position in which it can be at rest. Disbelief is in reality an act of belief: for it

accepts the direct negative of the statement proposed. Even that apparent suspension of judgment which neither affirms nor denies, is a form of belief: for it accepts, as an intermediate proposition, the possibility of either affirming or denying. The infidel believes: for of two propositions he embraces that which asserts that certain doctrines are false. Even the Pyrrhonist believes: for he holds that nothing is credible. The opposition, therefore, is in reality not between belief and unbelief, but between belief and misbelief; not between faith and reason, but between those processes, whether true or false, of the reason, by which the mind makes its decision. Supposing the reasoning faculties to be sound, and to have all necessary information at command, they attain the truth with the regularity of a machine: unless, as happens too often, there is some extraneous hindrance, some interference from the emotive element in human nature, perverting the judgment. All error is the growth either of imperfect knowledge, of imperfect ratiocination, or of some obliquity in the moral nature. Belief will be right or wrong, just as the reasonings on which it depends are good or bad; but, plainly, far from being in any case incompatible with reason, it is, not the

antithesis of reason, but the necessary sequence and result of it.

There is no force at all, therefore, in this imaginary distinction between an age of faith and an age of reason; nor in the consequent assumption that the progress of time is likely to reverse the judgment of former ages, unless it can be shown that time has brought an accession of knowledge bearing on the points in question, or has considerably improved the mental faculties, or has removed some moral hindrances which formerly perverted the judgment. When we speak of some persons as being more sceptical than others, we mean either that their reasoning faculties, being more developed, require naturally to be more fully enlightened before being convinced, or, as is only too often the case, that excessive self-confidence, indisposing them to receive the testimony of others, or some other moral infirmity, revolting from the truth proposed, makes them unwilling to believe.* In the same way, one century may be more credulous than another, either from its faculties for reason-

* Accession of knowledge does not of necessity make one more sceptical—may act *vice versâ; e.g.*, the King of Siam was incredulous about water frozen, till he knew *how* cold acts on fluids.

ing being more limited, or from a moral predisposition towards believing any particular doctrines; but not otherwise. When it is argued that the nineteenth century, because it is more scientific, is therefore likely to cancel and supersede the faith of the preceding eighteen centuries, it must be shown that in those days there was either an irrational eagerness to embrace the doctrines of Christianity, or an inadequacy of information on the subject; for it cannot be seriously maintained that, apart from the action of these causes, there is any appreciable disparity in the reasoning powers of this and those generations.

Now it is inconceivable that in any age there should be a proclivity or predilection, in opposition to the dictates of reason, towards doctrines so self-renouncing as those of Christianity. To affirm this of a religion the very essence of which is the complete and continual sacrifice of self, is too paradoxical to require an answer. Nor can it be said that the advance of scientific knowledge affects the question. For this advance is not *in pari materia;* it is chiefly, if not solely, in that department of knowledge which, though apt to arrogate to itself exclusively and unwarrantably the name of "science," is bounded

by the hard confines of the material world; it is only in knowledge which can be enlarged and corrected by induction, and in which consequently the widened observation and additional experience of a later century count for everything. But Christianity is no system of geology or of chemistry; its tenets are undisturbed by their discoveries. In the regions of immaterial science—in ethic, for instance, or metaphysic—it is not so evident that any real progress has been made, except indeed such as may be indirectly traced to Christianity itself. But what if there has been progress here also? Christianity was not given as a philosophical theory on the soul or on virtue, but for the practical guidance of life. As the revelation of the true relations, inaugurated by itself, between man and the Deity, it is unaffected by the onward march of time. It is vain* to argue, that because certain mediæval superstitions have crumbled into nothing at the touch of modern science, therefore the work of destruction will be carried further indefinitely. Physical causes may be brought to light, sufficient in themselves to account for this or that circumstance which was reputed miraculous in the

* The old "Sorites" fallacy.

Middle Ages; but this is not to prove an universal negative on the subject of miracles. Nor can any conceivable advance of science account for the transcendent truths of a moral and spiritual nature, which are no excrescence to be pared away by the knife, but the very life of Christianity. Let it be granted, for the argument's sake, that modern geology, precarious and fluctuating as are its guesses at present, disproves conclusively the Mosaic account of creation; or, that minute researches into the Judaic history detect undeniable inaccuracies there; or, that "modern criticism" applied to the Gospels refutes the traditionary account of their authorship; or that modern science, by elucidating the apparently uniform action of the laws which regulate the universe, places miracles in a new light—for revelation does not vouchsafe any theory of the *modus operandi*—manifesting them to be in harmonious accordance with the laws* of the Divine economy, rather than an arbitrary violation of them; still, amid all these and other vicissi-

* Some confusion arises in the use of the terms "natural" and "material." That which is a violation of a material law may be in perfect accordance with a law of nature in the larger sense of that term.

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tudes of thought, the articles of the Christian faith, based as they are on the Word and Person of Christ, as of One proved by His life and death to be the Son of God, would remain the same as before. The vaunt of progress, if closely scrutinised, dwindles into insignificance. It amounts, in fact, to scarcely more than this, that, as time goes on, some phenomena relating to the physical conditions, past and present, of man's life on earth are rescued here and there from the vast surrounding darkness, as children snatch a few shells and stones from the wave as it recedes from the shore; while on the frail basis of these scanty phenomena new theories are reared, too often, like the sand castles of the little architects, only to be swept away by the next wave as it rushes in. At all events, if in the knowledge of the material universe progress has been made, there is no reason for the assumption that Christianity is in danger of being confuted, or even modified, by the discoveries of modern science.

History abounds with illustrations of this great truth, often strangely overlooked, that progress of a moral and spiritual kind is not of necessity co-ordinate with progress in material

knowledge, nor even with that enhanced subtlety of the intellect which accompanies material civilisation. Among the nations before the Christian era, Egypt, China, India, were eminent in the cultivation of material arts and sciences, but not proportionately in their ideas of God and morality. Their debasing superstitions show that in these they were far surpassed by the comparatively inartistic and unscientific tribes of the Hebrews. The Greeks of the day of Pericles were far more advanced than their ruder forefathers in material refinement and intellectual culture; but their gross and puerile mythology is a declension from that nobler faith, the grand outlines of which loom dimly, because fast fading away, through the tragedies of Æschylus. In the history of the world, as in the growth of each individual mind, progress is but another word for increased experience, and is therefore of necessity confined to those subjects our knowledge of which is enlarged by experience.

The testimony, therefore, of Christendom (during nineteen centuries), or, in other words, of those nations which have proved themselves in moral qualities the foremost in the world during that period, cannot be set aside as of

little value among the evidences of Christianity; for the inferiority of those centuries in the physical sciences cannot invalidate their testimony on other and higher subjects. Their testimony is valuable also as showing, in point of fact, what are, and what are not, the doctrines historically transmitted as the Christian faith.

But it is asserted that the "Anglican" Communion (as it is the somewhat pedantic fashion to call it) cannot legitimately make use of this argument; that, owing to the dissensions and disruptions of Christendom, it does not, and cannot fairly, reason from authority in calling on its members to believe. Now it is true, of course, that the English Church does not propound authority as the ultimate reason for belief; it cannot say, as if claiming infallibility, that this or that doctrine must be taken for granted simply on the authority of the Church. But beyond this the assertion has no meaning. So far as the doctrines of the English Church are common to all Christian communities—and in this point of view the concurring testimony even of those communities which have separated themselves from the Church Catholic is of weight—this unanimous consent is a valid argument.

So far as the doctrines are distinctively peculiar to itself, there is the appeal to the earliest Christian centuries; and on no other ground than this can answer be made adequately to those who dissent from these doctrines on either side. That what is new in spiritual matters, is not likely to be true, and that the old ways are best, are as much axioms of the English Church now as before the sixteenth century, and may be used now with more consistency. The very instance often quoted to the contrary is really an instance to this effect. The doctrine of a material change in the consecrated elements is rejected, because it is believed to be an innovation on the faith transmitted from Apostolic times. This is invariably the test which the English Church applies to any doctrine, its guiding principle in accepting or disallowing it. The great characteristic of the English Prayer-book is, that it is essentially derived from the ancient symbols and formularies of the Church. There are other and deeper reasons for believing in Christianity, reasons which underlie this argument from authority, that is, from the testimony of former generations. But it is this argument which for all persons presents itself to the mind first in order of time; for the poor and unlearned this is

the only argument within reach, except that greatest of all arguments which rises from the practical assent of the conscience. As determining historically what the Christian faith really was in apostolic and sub-apostolic times, this argument is, so far as it can be ascertained, conclusive for Christians. In both senses, whether as historical evidence to prove what are really the doctrines of Christianity, or as one of the cumulative evidences for the truth, the Church of England, notwithstanding her isolated position, can fairly use it; for on the cardinal points of the faith the appeal is made to the consent of the Christian world, on points in dispute to that of Christian antiquity. In neither sense is the force of the argument from authority in danger of being weakened by modern discoveries.

It is characteristic of the exaggerated importance attached to the sometimes crude theorisings of modern scepticism, that the effect produced through Europe by M. Renan has been compared to the electric shock of Luther's writings in the sixteenth century. Certainly Luther's fellow-countrymen would not admit the comparison. The rationalists of Germany repudiated M. Renan's rhapsodies. Even in Paris, where the social atmosphere is such as

to predispose men to welcome an attack on Christianity under the guise of a sentimental enthusiasm, and where logical precision with symmetry of method and elegance of style go far to outweigh deeper considerations, even in Paris his influence has been only transient. His speculations are not likely to gain even a momentary ascendancy where, as in England, there is an instinctive repugnance to unreality in every shape.

Such theories as those of Strauss and Renan carry in themselves their own refutation. They contain an admission of all that the advocate of Christianity need require as the postulates of his belief. The conclusions at which the sceptic arrives are often strangely inconsistent with the premises which he cannot altogether exclude from his scheme. There these admissions remain, an unacknowledged and unintentional evidence for the very truths against which he is contending. Thus when he allows, as M. Renan does, the authenticity, even in the barest and most general sense, of the narrative comprised in the Gospels, he encounters an insuperable difficulty. He cannot explain that narrative in any intelligible manner—except on the supposition which is the basis of the Christian faith—

without either an absolute denial, or a palpable distortion equivalent to denial, not of particular details here and there, but of all which is distinctive in the narrative, of that which pervades it from beginning to end, of that which alone gives life and coherence to its parts. 'L'Evangile selon Renan,' as it has been termed, differs from the Gospel of the New Testament, not in this or that particular, but throughout, in substance, in character, in essence. It is only necessary to place the two narratives side by side: the unlikeness is self-evident.

For the Christ of this neology is not in any true sense the Christ of the Gospels. It is a being different not in degree but in kind. The Christ of the neo-evangels is a man, gifted indeed in greater or less measure with qualities that win affection and respect, but with more or less of alloy in his composition; at the best only a man. The Christ of the Gospels is presented to us as of unique excellence, as the incarnation of Deity. On the theories of Strauss and Renan it is simply impossible to account for the idea of Christ which confronts us in every page of the Gospels, as of a Person divine though wearing the form and nature of men. What has been often said as to the impossibility of the character of Christ

having been a mere invention of any human imagination, is true of that character as we find it in the Gospels, and as we do not find it in these humanising versions of them. *L'inventeur en serait plus étonnant que le héros.* For the Christ pourtrayed in the Gospels is a Being, sinless, though tempted, without moral frailty or infirmity, holy and wise in a superhuman degree. The difference between Christ so depicted and others, the best and wisest of the human race, is not the difference between persons more or less faulty, not between good men and one who is better, but between One who is without the least moral blemish and others who are all more or less imperfect. For, though described in the Gospels as sharing in all the ordinary physical conditions of man's nature, Christ is there without taint or speck of moral evil. His teaching and His life both bear this impression of perfection. His teaching is marked by a sublimity of moral and spiritual wisdom which far transcends the highest attainments of the Jewish or Gentile world; by precepts and doctrines new to those who heard them, but recognised at once, when uttered, in their innate sovereignty over the conscience; by great truths not dimly adumbrated as by the lips of Jewish

seers, nor evolved to a hesitating and faltering conclusion by a laborious process of guesses and surmises as in the Platonic Dialogues, but enounced clearly and "with authority," in all the fullness of insight, in a tone and with a manner which, while thrilling the depths of man's nature, is yet majestically calm and composed, and perfectly free from superficial excitement. No wonder that those who heard Him said that "He spake as never man spake." And of whom else could it be said without reserve, "He hath done all things well?" What other life has ever been marked in its every aspect, in each word and deed, without even a momentary shadow of inconsistency, by that which is the principle of all moral excellence, pure and unalloyed unselfishness, manifested in the unresting activity of its benevolence, in its entire resignation under suffering, in its complete devotion of self in order to do good to others and to do the will of Heaven? What other life in respect of truth and purity will bear a close and microscopic inspection but this? What other is marked by a width of benign sympathy co-extensive with the whole human family, yet tenderly discriminative for each individual; by a simplicity and gracious dignity of demeanour (very unlike the undignified

grotesqueness of the great moralist of Athens) never lost for a moment; by an unerring insight into the hearts of men; by the unvarying serenity of an unclouded conscience, and of the most intimate communion with His Heavenly Father —in short, by qualities not one of which in anything like perfection can be descried even singly in the recorded life of any saint, hero, or philosopher, but which are all in their combined perfections to be seen in Him?* It cannot be disputed that this, and far more than this, is the representation of Christ in the Gospel; nor that the Christ of neologians is something very far short of this. Such a development of human nature as this, and in the person of a poor Galilean of the age in which Christ lived, is superhuman and divine.

Whence, then, has this conception of Christ, this image of perfect humanity, found its way into the Gospels except from reality? That the followers of Christ should have been led, even by the wildest fanaticism or by the most shameless audacity of imposture, to assign divine attributes at all to such a person as He

* The argument for the divinity of Christ from his character on earth is well enforced at length in *The Christ of History*, by J. Young, LL.D. (Allan).

was according to the *Vie de Jésus*, is highly improbable. But it is simply impossible that they should have been able to imagine or invent a character so ineffably worthy of love and reverence, so far transcending the highest examples to be found in history or fiction. The result of all these futile attempts to eliminate the divine element from the person of Christ is to leave, on the one hand, as historical, a narrative inconsistent with itself, unmeaning, and palpably unreal, and, on the other hand, a faultless character—which appeals to all that is good in man's nature more persuasively and commandingly than the noblest utterances of Greek philosophy—as the invention either of the Evangelists, whose names the Gospels bear, or of others in a literary point of view as obscure as they. These neological theories confute themselves. It is inexplicable that One, who lived and died a Galilean peasant, should have been even what they allow Him to have been, unless He were indeed something far greater. It is inexplicable, again, that the divine features, which they expunge from His life, should ever have been imputed to any one, and, most of all, to one in those circumstances, unless they actually existed. The evangelic

narrative, with the whole superstructure of the Creeds of Christendom, rests on the foundation of truth, purity, and love; in other words, on the perfect wisdom and goodness embodied in the Person of Christ Jesus.

CHAPTER IV

AGNOSTICISM

"Ἐν δε φαεῖ και ὀλεσσον."

It is often alleged by those who have called themselves "Agnostics," that observation is the basis of all knowledge, and that this basis is wanting to Christianity.* Is this allegation true?

Let it be granted at once that observation is primary, paramount, indispensable in acquiring knowledge. How the "I" touches that which is not "I," how the brain works, are curious topics for physiology and psychology; but, however these questions may be answered, the solid fact remains, that observation is the

* See, particularly, the late Professor Huxley's Essay on the "Foundations of Belief" in *The XIXth Century*, March, 1895. In Professor Huxley was a rare combination of literary as well as of scientific excellence, and a brilliant instance how a specialist can survey the horizon, and a scientist can be also a philosopher.

first and last test of truth and falsehood. Call it experience, perception, induction, what we will, observation alone is a sure basis for the processes of reason.

But this basis of all knowing is not the observation of the individual observer only; it is the sum total of the observation of all who have bequeathed a trustworthy record of actual experience. If he is reasonably sure that this testimony may be relied upon, the student to-day avails himself of this legacy from the past, at any rate till it is corrected by fresh experience still more convincing. Whether in the trivial doings of daily life or in the more exacting requirements of the study and the laboratory, we all build continually on the foundations laid by others, and we accept their conclusions, unless superseded by evidence more cogent and more complete. Possibly the observation which comes to me second-hand, though to me personally impalpable, may be better than my own (for experience by hearing is experience), if I am assured that it is the result of honest, competent observation, and has not been impaired in transmission. Otherwise induction, except the narrowest, would be impossible, and the onward march of science

would be paralysed, for each successive student would have to begin his task anew, where his predecessors began. The isolated toilers of each generation would work on single-handed to the end. Men would be like the lower animals, incapacitated for co-operation.

But observation must be taken in its full sense. Man's faculty of observing is not limited to the perception of material objects, though all knowledge in its rudimentary stage seems to start from the senses. The phenomena of the moral as well as of the material world are within the scope of his observation in the pages of history, and in the daily experience of life. Indeed, the phenomena resulting from and bearing witness to character are, in one aspect, when ascertained, more to be relied upon than material phenomena, inasmuch as there is nothing within the range of man's intelligence less uncertain than the existence of right and wrong morally. Observation takes note of these ethical characteristics in the life, death, teaching of Jesus Christ, and finds therein a reasonable justification for giving credence to Him. There are many corroborating lines of thought; and yet, after all, the Personality of Christ is enough in itself to justify His claim to be what He claims to be.

If, then, the informant or teacher is credible, and if he deals with the topics, about which he may be trusted, it is not unreasonable to accept his teaching. If Faraday, Herschel, Huxley, tell us what they know, their knowledge becomes ours, so far as we are capable of receiving it. If the Teacher on the Mount tells us of right and wrong, of duty and conscience, of the happiness which is inward, intrinsic, inalienable, we ought to listen, for, being unique in holiness, He speaks of what He knows. If the Christ taught of gravitation or electricity, if He elaborated a philosophy of ethics, we might demur. But when He tells men, as none other has ever told them, how to overcome the evil in themselves and around them, it is reasonable to give credence to One, who is alone without flaw or imperfection of all the sons of men.

So much will be granted by some, at least, of those who reject Christianity. The perfectly good man, they allow, is privileged to speak of goodness,* of right and wrong, of the meaning and motive of morality. *Unicuique in arte suâ*

* The question of the genesis of morality is separate from the question whether or not there is such a thing as morality. There is evolution here, as in the material world.

credendum. They listen with reverence to the Sermon on the Mount; they demur when Christ speaks of God and heaven. Man's knowledge of God, they say, is essentially different in kind from material science.

In reply it may be urged reasonably, that goodness is connected very closely, if not inextricably, with the idea of God. For every duty implies a person, to whom it is due; and the highest conception of duty implies the highest of Personalities. The almost universal consent of mankind connects the notion of sin with the notion of a God. If man needs forgiveness and amendment, the convictions of conscience lead him to look to God. Therefore, when the Perfect Man tells us that He is the Eternal Son of God, He is not diverging from His own specialty. By parity of reasoning, He is entitled to our belief about this as about conduct in our lives. *Unicuique in arte suâ credendum.*

Waiving this, however, the perfect holiness of Christ in another way accredits His teachings, even when they are to us transcendent and mysterious. For His sincerity is not questioned; it is an inseparable property of goodness. He cannot deceive intentionally. Nor can it be

objected reasonably in His case, that even goodness may err, outside its own sphere, through unreasonable enthusiasm. For the self-imposed limitations of Christ in teaching are very remarkable. If He taught what is to be learnt through human investigation, His authority on things spiritual would be less. But even on His own domain Christ limits His scope carefully, on the one hand propounding no theoretical scheme of morality, founding no school of philosophy; on the other hand refusing to arbitrate on the application of the law or of the principle in particular cases.* Because He disclaims authority in other things, He is all the more entitled to it when He claims it. If a friend shows himself worthy of credence, while speaking of things within my comprehension, as of truth, purity, kindness, it is no unreasonable presupposition that he is right, when speaking of things which transcend my reason.

There are, no doubt, many other evidential lines of thought converging in Christianity, accumulative and corroborative of the faith of a Christian. But, after all, the reason of reasons is Christ Himself. By this test the faith of His

* "Who made Me a judge or divider among you?"

followers must stand or fall. At the present time, more than ever, this is recognised by adherents and opponents alike. It is a reasonable test for all who do not deny that there is a right and wrong morally. It is not for the clever or cultivated only, but for all. It is a practical test, for unless I am conscious of a defect in myself, which none but He can supply, unless I appreciate the beauty of His holiness, unless I hunger and thirst to become better than I am, unless I am grateful for love passing imagination, the call "Come unto Me" falls on my ears meaningless and inane.

There cannot be demonstrative evidence of Christianity. Demonstration would exclude faith. The willing surrender of self to the Holiest would be compulsory and mechanical. In theory, "a state of mind between knowledge and no-knowledge" may be "a nonentity philosophically."* In theory, "the merest glimmer is as much non-darkness as broad sunlight."† When St Paul says, "I know in whom I have believed," the word may be in theory indefensible, if "to know" means the certitude of an exact science. But for all practical purposes

* Huxley. See before. † *Ibid.*

the word is true. For in the twilight of our life here other knowing cannot be; St Paul knew the trustworthiness of the Christ, that He is able and willing to "save to the uttermost" all who come to Him.

CHAPTER V

MIRACLES

"Law in the universe is irrefragable."—Sir Oliver Lodge.

The standpoint in theology (as in all departments of thought) is not the same in England now as it was sixty years ago. How can it be? Every succeeding generation presents to itself its thoughts about things invisible with a different environment, as the waves of advancing knowledge overtake one another. We are not at the end of the process yet. After all, if that which is essential and vital remains, the environment matters not very much. Indeed it is gain, if, as is the law in the evolution of things, the standpoint shifts continually more and more from the innocent wonderment of childhood to a more intelligent appreciation. A clever* disputant can prove easily enough that the authority of Paley and Butler is not

* *XIXth Century*, No. cccxx.—"Religious Apologetics."

what it was in their own period. Can he show that Christianity is therefore exploded?

It would be, to say the least, a rather hasty way of generalising to class Butler with Paley as an "Old Bailey advocate" for Christianity. Butler's reasoning is built too much on "natural religion," which is certainly an insecure foundation, although not so regarded by Butler's opponents, the Deists. Still, with this limitation, Butler's is quite another kind of argument from Paley's way of putting the apostles into the witness-box and cross-examining them, in order to extract the truth from their lips. Perhaps there is rather too much of the "Old Bailey advocacy" in the peremptory demand for eye-witness of the Resurrection and the Incarnation.

The truth—that is what every honest thinker wants to find. But there are two meanings of the word, and it is of importance not to confuse them nor to put the lower before the higher. I am not speaking of the subjective meaning of the word,* which is what we call "sincerity," but of truth objective so far as man can grasp it. There is truth actual, and there is truth ideal. We want Plato again among us, to

* Truth, "what each man troweth"—Horne Tooke.

remind us which of these two aspects of truth is to take precedence.* The mere archæologist will probably say, Give me facts, figures, names. Those with a deeper insight and a wider survey of man and his capacities, know that the truths which transcend others are not ponderable nor measurable, nor can be tested by the fallacious, treacherous experience of the senses. Try to ascertain precisely what took place on any occasion, in private life or public, and even from trustworthy witnesses you get statements conflicting one with another. But the fundamental laws of right and wrong have a general, if not a universal, consent, which even a Pyrrhonist cannot put aside as of no account. To know the exact distance of our planet from the sun is like the answer to an amusing riddle. To know that it is worse to cheat than to be cheated is a step onward in the growth of a race or of an individual. Unless the controversies about religion start from ethical principles, they are merely "beating the air."

Before taking for granted that "miracles are discredited" and that the "supernatural" must be ruled out of court, it is well to define what is

* Those who prefer it can read Plato now in Jowett's translation.

meant by these terms. Probably there are very few educated persons now who regard an alleged "miracle" as an arbitrary interruption of a law of nature. The word itself tells its own story; it is something wonderful. The same phenomenon which nowadays is clearly explained by physical causes may be a wonder, a sign, a portent to men in other ages or in other countries. It served its purpose if it startled the careless and fixed their attention on what might otherwise have been disregarded. So far as a "miracle" is the outcome of an extraordinary combination and adjustment of ordinary forces—as when in an emergency the east wind drives back the waters*—it is objectively as well as subjectively a miracle, for to effect this combination and adjustment is beyond the power of man. But obviously the thing is quite as truly "miracle" if at the time and in given circumstances it seems inexplicable although it shall be resolved into the operation of natural laws as physical science moves on.

In this sense it would be rash to say that miracles are "discredited," or to prophesy that they ever will be. "Wonders never cease." The horizon recedes as science advances. That

* *E.g.*, Exodus x. 19; xiv. 21.

the miracle no longer holds so prominent a place in the thoughts of believers in Christianity as in patristic, mediæval post-Reformation periods, is a truism. When a missionary lands on a far-away island, hitherto unvisited by Europeans, the fact that he comes across the ocean in a ship commands the reverence of savages. He seems miraculous, and they are predisposed to hear him. But this is only the preface to the book. What he has to tell them must appeal to the conscience, which responds, however faintly, in everyone to such an appeal. So it is, so it has been, in the history of the world. It is the message itself that concerns mankind. The credentials of the messenger are merely prefatory.

A very able lecturer,* speaking recently of miracles, gave "four possible categories" to one or other of which any alleged miracle is to be assigned: "(i.) An orderly and natural though unusual portent; (ii.) a disturbance due to unknown . . . capricious agencies; (iii.) a utilisation by mental or spiritual power of unknown laws; (iv.) direct interposition of the Deity." If by "capricious agencies" are meant the fairies or wizards of Demonology, the second of these hypotheses need not be taken into account

* Sir Oliver Lodge at Birmingham, November, 1904.

seriously. The first and third may be taken together as signifying an extraordinary result produced by laws known to us or unknown, and the fourth as signifying an arbitrary interference of the Deity with the order of the universe. For those, then, who believe that all things move by law, and who believe also in an omniscient and omnipotent Lawgiver, directing all things, the question is simply:—Is the alleged miracle, supposing the fact to have been ascertained, an apparent violation of law or not? The supreme Ruler of the world can so control the action of His laws by adjusting and regulating their coincidence, as to produce a result, such as human ingenuity cannot, by the concurrence of various forces.

The lecturer spoke of a possible explanation of a miracle as "a utilisation of unknown laws by mental or spiritual forces." The word *mental* is hardly needed here, if physical science indicates more and more clearly that mental processes can be resolved into physical, and that in reality the Will is the only spiritual energy. Anyhow, the utilisation of laws known or unknown so as to produce a "portent" seems the true explanation of what is meant by "miracle" or "miraculous." The very term speaks for itself; it is a some-

thing wonderful, awful, portentous. Instead of ontological guessings, what we have to do is, to regard the miraculous in its bearing on those who are affected by it. The relativity of things, as Aristotle affirmed,* is what we are concerned with, unless our philosophy is to lose itself in the clouds. This is within our cognisance; the other is not. The effect of a miracle is obvious. It arrests attention, it startles indifference, it wakens the dormant consciousness otherwise impervious to the Message; it opens the way for truth which might otherwise fail to win a hearing. "Law in the universe is irrefragable." But by coming to men as abnormal, a miracle quickens and incites. An essential test of the miraculous is, the congruity of it or the incongruity with what the general consent of mankind deems to be right ethically. Here at least we have sure footing; this at least we can know, even if other things by their perpetual flux and reflux baffle and elude our knowledge.

If, then, miracles are to be regarded subjectively rather than objectively, it follows, that what is miraculous at one time, in one place, to one set of persons, may be explicable in itself as with time advances experience. Thus the

* προς ἡμας, not ἁπλῶς—*Ethica Nicomach.*

miracles of one age may be no miracles to another. If at the time when it occurred the incident was awe-striking, because inexplicable, to those who were aware of it, it was miraculous, even though a wider, deeper insight can discover that it followed the operation of natural laws. Fuller knowledge discloses more and more the *modus operandi* in things; and, if not in this life, yet beyond it, the incessant permeance of law and the unsleeping vigilance of the Lawmaker through all the wonders of the universe will surely manifest themselves completely.

The crucial question is, whether we are to believe in a stupendous machine self-working, or in a machine guided and controlled by the machinist. To this, questions of detail are altogether subordinate. The origin of life, for example, "on this planet"—whether it was by instantaneous *Fiat* or by slow, patient, development—matters little. If the progress of physical science shows that the word "creation" in its popular use is a misnomer, this involves no contradiction between Science and Religion. Rather the forethought implied by evolution is more consonant with the attributes of Omniscience. The wisdom which can evolve by the

interaction of many conflicting laws a result unattainable by the wisdom of man, is superhuman. The revelation, from outside himself, which man needs, and which comes to him in proportion to his need, is not of what he can discover for himself by his investigations, but a revelation of God in His power, holiness, love, and of man in his actual limitations, his potential illimitability. And this revelation is found, not in the surmises of Natural Religion, but in the Person of Christ.

An intelligent Christian accepts what is incomprehensible to him in Christianity, because he has ethical reasons for giving credence to Christ, for trusting Him. He does not base his faith in Christ on miracles alleged of Him, though these may have helped to gain a hearing for the Gospel in the first promulgation of it. Satisfied reasonably of the trustworthiness of the Person who claims his allegiance, he is content to take on trust what he cannot explain.

The real question then is, Are the moral credentials of the Christ adequate? Do they justify the surrender of Self to Him? By this test Christianity must stand or fall. This is a question which modern criticism even of the

New Testament does not touch. The Personality of Jesus is unique. It cannot have been invented. Whatever uncertainty there may be as to the names and dates of the writers or compilers of the several narratives, whatever inaccuracies may be detected in this or that paragraph, the ethical character of the Teacher and of His teaching stands above these minutiæ. Of none else in the world's history could it be truly predicated, "He hath done all things well"; "No man ever spake like this Man."

The objection that we have only a portion, a fragment of His life, is hardly to be considered. As Owen or Cuvier could construct the extinct mammal from the foot only, or the thigh, so from what has been preserved in the record of Christianity, it is easy to see the rest. Indeed, the silence of the life preparatory to the ministry and the self-effacement in Nazareth, some thirty years, are more eloquent than words. Had He come into the world to assert Himself, it might have been otherwise. He came to save.

The old objection is repeated again and again against the incidents of the swine in Decapolis, and the barren fig-tree. The old answer might suffice, that those two incidents stand alone; that, as destructive, they are the

notable exceptions to the law of beneficence exemplified in the dealings of Christ, and that by their very contrast they serve to emphasise the love which manifested itself on other occasions. It might be enough to leave these incidents unexplained and inexplicable, on the ground that the confidence placed in the Christ (for valid reasons) is strong enough to justify doing so. In the case of a friend who has proved himself in other ways worthy of our loyalty, we are not alarmed even though some things in his conduct seem inexplicable. The misgiving is outweighed and stilled by other prevailing considerations. But, surely, to those who realise what sin is, there is no need to go far in search of an explanation of this apparent severity. In both Gadara and Bethany there is, for those who care to see it, an object-lesson, more telling than language, of the awfulness of submission to evil.

This it is which underlies all questions of the credibility of Christianity. Leave this out, and the Gospel is not, cannot claim to be, what the word denotes; the "good tidings" are not worth having, the whole narrative is a tissue of impossibilities. But if any one knows the need for forgiveness, if anyone hungers and thirsts to be set free from the tyranny of evil, then the

appearance on earth of a "Son of Man," altogether sinless, who comes to rescue man from an evil power too strong for him unaided, is the master-key to problems of life otherwise insoluble; and if His presence on earth brings with it much that is to finite capacity incomprehensible, this is the inevitable accompaniment and sequence of His coming. The life and death of Christ are evidence of the marvels of Bethlehem, of the Sepulchre, and of Mount Olivet.

Of course it is easy to cite other instances of high ethical teaching and, what is more, of high practice from other lives. The conscience of mankind, sometimes feebly remonstrating, sometimes upbraiding boldly, is for ever making its protest for right against wrong, ever aspiring upwards, a flame that cannot be kept down. But sin is selfishness, and the perfect unalloyed unselfishness of the Christ in life as in teaching is a thing different from the self-annihilation of Buddha or the self-elaboration for Self's sake of the philosophy which culminates in the lofty but sterile ethics of M. Aurelius. Let it once be realised that self-seeking, however dressed up in almost countless disguises, is the essential quality of sin; and that self-sacrifice for others'

sake is the training of man for his most complete development, and the enigma of life is solved. The pain and suffering on earth which seem superficially irreconcilable with a just and kind providence are the probation for perfection.

Nor is it only within the four corners of the New Testament that this moral testimony supports the claim of the Christ to be the "Son of God made man." The subsequent influence of Christianity on the world, what it has done and does in every age, in every land, must be counted in. Prescription by itself is nothing: it may be cited for any and every abuse; even the permanency* in the world of Christianity, its endurance through all the vicissitudes of time, in spite, too, of monstrous inconsistencies in those who have professed it, cannot be insisted on as irrefutable. But the practical fruit of Christianity in the lives, however sparse, of those who have made it real, is an argument which cannot be resisted, so long as the antagonism is recognised between vice and virtue. Such a career as that of Saul of Tarsus is an evidence in itself for the truth of the Gospel. What drew him over to the side of Christ from the front rank of

* *The Permanence of Christianity.* Bampton Lectures, 1868. Rev. Canon J. R. T. Eaton, M.A.

opponents was the very motive which is the root of all real Christianity, a longing for perfect holiness in a world, to say the best, of a very mixed character. Men and women like Xavier and Elizabeth Fry, books like the *Imitatio*, the *Christian Year*, the *Pilgrim's Progress*, will be, to the end of time, impregnable against cavillings, however ingenious, about the precise accuracy of the sacred records. Can any other teacher (asks one * of the profoundest thinkers of any age) say, "Come unto Me and I will give you rest"? The inherent power of Christianity to raise the fallen is the greatest miracle in the world.

* Augustine of Hippo.

CHAPTER VI

WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

φωνᾶντα συνέτοισι—PINDAR.

"THE Bible at the present time is studied more than ever by the few, while by the many it is apparently less read than half a century ago." Yet, if the saying is true, that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," and if this saying is indeed "worthy of all men to be received," the Book which tells about Him is for all. It is mainly through forgetting that Christ Jesus is really the subject of the books composing the Bible that the Bible is too often left on the shelf. The word of Christ to His Book, as to His Church, is, "Be witness of Me." Of the older Scriptures, the Jewish Scriptures, He has said, "They testify of Me." So long as men look into the Bible for what they can find as well or better elsewhere, so long they turn from it

disappointed and perplexed. But as the revelation to men of God in Man, it is indeed the voice of the Holy Spirit to the conscience of men. For the Incarnation of God the Son is not merely the revelation of the Triune God in Christ Jesus; it is in this very act a revelation of man to himself, of man's capacity for being made one with God, and, alas! (for the light deepens the shadows) of man's capacity for growing into the likeness of devils.* The Incarnation is the foundation of the creeds of Christendom and of the Christian's daily life.

If, as Christians believe, God lived and died on earth, and rose again, for the sake of men some two thousand years ago, this fact transcends in importance all else that ever occurred among men. All other events, actual or even within the compass of a reasonable imagination, are nothing in comparison with this. The Christian era is not one among other waymarks; as mankind marches on, it is unique and absolute. Babylon, Athens, Rome, with all their magnificent associations, can never be what Bethlehem and Calvary are. That which

* This was written before I had the advantage of reading Dr Lock's Essay on the Old Testament in Oxford House Papers.

men try to express by the word Incarnation is at once strangest of conceivable mysteries and most intensely practical of facts. How and why it came about, that, so far as we know, the Supreme One condescended thus on this small planet only, may be a curious problem for an inquisitive mind; but is scarcely more relevant to men practically than an inquiry into the laws of gravitation to a fly on the leaf of a tree.

This advent of God to dispel the black shadow of sin and death brooding over the brightness of the earth concerns all men, for it touches the welfare of all very nearly. To know about it cannot be the privilege of the learned, the clever, the people of leisure. It speaks for itself to all, though in varying tones. To all alike the essential guarantee, that Jesus Christ is indeed "Emmanuel," "God with us," is His perfect freedom from sin, as He is portrayed in the memoirs of His life on earth; and that this portraiture is true there is assurance, apart from more elaborate evidence, because a character so perfect could not be invented. Other things may arrest attention and prepare the way for the acceptance of this disclosure of God in Christ, as previous

announcements fulfilled in Him, works of mercy and power done by Him, the history of His Church: all these are corroborative. But the essential proof of His being what He claims to be, God the Son in the nature of man, is something which all can appreciate, if they will, and which all ought to appreciate, if there is an immutable law of moral right and wrong. There is no need of the learning of the scribe to recognise Him through the disguise of His humiliations, to love and to revere His unparalleled holiness. This appeals to all; it is a practical test, a touchstone of reality for all. "Believe in Him" is no arbitrary requirement; for it means the preference of light to darkness, of virtue to vice, of God to self.*

Thus in Christ Himself, in His personality as man, in His words and life, is the assurance that the Incarnation is no figment, no dream. Because He bore no witness to Himself in the ordinary sense, therefore the witness in Himself is all the more persuasive. Incredible otherwise, the Incarnation becomes more than credible, even a necessity for man, if once in His self-sacrifice men grasp the awful realness of sin and love—of sin in its horrors, of love in its

* *Cf.* St John iii. 13; 1 Cor. xii. 3; 1 St John ii. 22, v. 5.

illimitability. Without this conviction men will not be persuaded, though "one rose from the dead"; for the barren assent of the intellect is not the willing surrender of self and of everything to the Deliverer. With this conviction the life, which would otherwise be a hopeless enigma to him, is made intelligible to man by the Incarnation.

The Person of Jesus Christ is the "Rock" on which the Christian faith rests, the foundation of the edifice.* He bears a silent witness to Himself intrinsically, which appeals to every conscience, the witness of a life perfect in unselfishness from first to last, in spite of all the machinations of the powers of evil. All that is above our comprehension in the narrative—the Birth, for instance, or the Resurrection—takes its proper place there, as, of course, for all who realise who and what He is. All that seems to clash with our preconceptions may pass unchallenged, if the eyes are fixed on Him. "What think ye of Christ?" Is there for you in Him the "beauty of holiness," "that ye should desire Him"? The answer to these questions is for all time the only sure foundation of belief in the Bible and in Christianity: "Thou art the Son of

* *Cf.* St Matt. xvi. 18; 1 Cor. iii. 11.

God." His perfect holiness attests the credibility of the record of His miracles. We believe that He was able to do these, because we are assured that His will, as Man, was in constant unison with the will of His Father in Heaven.

The Bible is the written record of this unique revelation of God to man* in Christ Jesus. Though composed of many books differing widely in date, in style, in material, the Bible is one book in regard to this. It is this which gives cohesion to the separate books. The later portions relate the fact and the consequences of the Incarnation; the earlier, the preparation of the world for it.

The reason for accepting this record is, because it makes known to a sinning, suffering world the only healer in the Person of the Sinless Man, God the Son incarnate. It is the record of the Life on earth, "divinely beautiful, yet truly human" of the Saviour of the world.† The investigations of the learned may be helpful

* Differentiated in character and circumstances from mythical manifestations of a similar kind. The incarnate God of Christianity is not like the Apollo Belvedere a demi-god, "too fair to worship, too divine to love." While on earth He, for man's sake, "lays His glory by."

† *Epitome of the Life of Our Blessed Saviour*—Introduction. Rivington.

for the learned, as evincing the genuineness and authenticity of the record; but something else is wanted generally; nor is the mere assent of the intellect worth much without a real "hunger and thirst after righteousness." The testimony even of eye-witnesses only hardened the antagonism of the Pharisees. But when conscience realises that in Christ Jesus "all fulness dwells,"* that He alone is Man "made perfect through sufferings,"† that without Him is no escape from the bondage of evil habits; then all that is miraculous in the narrative is easy of acceptance. The wondrous birth, resurrection, ascension, the healings of the sick, the revocations of the dead to life, are to be expected in the earthly pilgrimage of the soul, always in perfect, uninterrupted accord with the will of the Father and of the Holy Ghost.

This, then, is the message of God to man in the Bible, the revelation of the Invisible One in the visible form of the man Christ Jesus, emancipating men from their enemy, the powers of darkness. What this book has to say is not archæology, not dates and names in history, not geology, not physical science of any sort, nothing which can be disinterred by the skill and industry

* Col. i. 19. † Heb. ii. 10.

of man; but, before and above all other knowledge, the knowledge of God, of self, of sin, of a rescuer. When this or that fault is alleged against the Bible, it is because the standpoint of the objector is wrong. He is looking away from that which should rivet his gaze to what is accidental and extraneous, as a commander in a battle who allows himself to be diverted from the real attack by the feint of a cunning strategist. Even the most startling of all difficulties about the Bible, the only real difficulty (for questionings about man's environment are really outside the scope of the Bible), the apparent tolerance of a defective morality* in the Old Testament, is solved, if it is remembered that the Old Testament relates the schooling of mankind for the coming of Christ, and the wonderful patience of the Father in Heaven with very unpromising scholars.

In this light even the inquiry into the origin and transmission of the Bible sinks into a secondary place. By the providential sequence of events the Bible is what it is. It tells, as no other book can, of One able and willing to rescue man from the tyranny of evil. The book is accredited to the conscience by the message

* *E.g.*, in the history of Jael and Sisera.

which it brings. Just as there is no need of argument to prove to men that there is in the world an alloy largely impairing the beauty and happiness of their lives, so there should be no need of argument to compel them to recognise the remedy when it offers itself. After all is said and done, a steady, unbiassed insight into things as they are must acknowledge that there is no real evil in life but sin. All else can be endured, even thankfully, joyfully, as the discipline for becoming perfect. But the ugly stain of guilt, the distortion of life's aims and purposes by self-will, the debasing slavery to selfish inclinations, must be got rid of utterly, if man is to become what he knows he can be, and what he aspires to be in his saner moments. The Bible shows how this can be attained, because it points to a Reconciler, such as no thought of man could have dared to devise, God Himself deigning to identify* Himself with His creatures, tempted† as man on every side, yet always victorious.

It may be instructive to learn how the complex arrangements of Providence have shaped and fitted together, and kept intact the com-

* The objection that the Atonement is an unjust substitution of the innocent for the guilty forgets this identification.

† Heb. iv. 15.

ponent parts of the Bible; how men specially equipped and commissioned by the Spirit for the purpose were raised up, one after the other, to be forerunners of Christ, or eye-witnesses of Him, or to disseminate the good news of Him; how the stubborn tenacity of the Jew guarded jealously the ancient record of the ages looking on to His coming; how the tongue of the Greek and the iron hand of the Roman conspired to send the Gospel far and wide; and how the searchings of modern scholarship sift and test the exactness of what is written. But, independently of all this, the message of the Bible goes straight of itself into the conscience sorrowing for the havoc wrought in the world by sin. It addresses itself to whatever is best in humanity; and whatever is there, higher and purer than the worship of self, responds at once with the grateful dedication of self to the highest of all ideals.

The labours of the learned lavished on the critical study of the Scriptures may help not a little to draw out the treasures latent in the great central truth whence, as in Correggio's *Nativity* (*Die Nacht*), the light radiates in every direction; and even when these studies have no direct bearing on the Incarnation, they may still have a value of their own. The out-

posts must be defended though the citadel is the main thing. Even when only "the hem of His garment" is touched, "virtue goes out of Him"* if the touch is loving and reverent. Even when only the fringe is handled of the great question of His personality, much is gained by honest, fearless, devout investigation. Probably there is no book which has been written about so voluminously in one way or another as the Bible. The result of all this thought and study may find its way to the many through the few, and may serve to elucidate and emphasise what might be obscure and questionable.†

On such topics as geology the attempt to force into agreement the opinions of the day and expressions which occur in the Bible is futile, not merely because science has not yet spoken finally, nor because a book for all time cannot be expected to reflect the opinions about physical science of this or that century, but because these things are not the staple of what the Bible has to say. Physical science excepted, there is large scope in various directions for the Biblical

* St Mark v. 30.

† Modern Biblical Criticism has done good incalculable in driving Christians to the "spirit" which the "letter" contains.

explorer. The spiritual meaning is best ascertained by making sure of the literal; just as a painter must distinguish the tints of the copse and of the cloud, and the configuration of the foliage, if he would seize the spirit of the landscape. Many a passage in the Scriptures, Old and New, can be understood rightly only through acquaintance with the manners and customs of the East. The historical accuracy of the narrative in the Bible of a battle lost or won may be of no great moment to those who come to the Bible for practical guidance in the daily life, and who know that life and death tremble in the balance; and yet they are interested when the narrative is verified from some extraneous source, by the discovery, it may be, of coin or monument, of writing graven on the rocks or wrapt in the swathings of a mummy.

What is called Natural Religion is at best only a guessing at hidden truth; but, even so, it has its analogies with what Christ reveals. The thinker who patiently, reverently, tries to measure the height and depth of man's being, and who can report what the wisest and holiest seekers after truth, outside as well as inside the pale of Christianity, have surmised about right and wrong, may contribute in no slight degree to

the ripe understanding of what Christ has revealed about man's destiny now and for ever.

Again, when the student sets himself to compare one part of Scripture with another, text with context, phrase with phrase, word with word, distinguishing in no pedantic spirit the niceties of expression; for what is true of other books is true especially of this, "*Nonnisi ex ipso libro librum intelliges.*" Indeed, misunderstandings about the Bible are usually due to taking particular verses without regard to the general drift and tenor of the revelation.

While gratitude and reverence are due to those who devote time and toil to Biblical studies, the vital truth must never be overlaid, that what is essential for all in the Bible is not beyond the reach of any, the revelation of God the Father, His law, His love, by God the Spirit, in God the Son, for the sake of men made Man. Like the sun in the sky, the light evangelic shines for all.

There is no need of arguments to show that Christ is the keynote of the New Testament. It is obvious even to a careless ear; while to those who listen more closely, richer, fuller harmonies evolve themselves out of this central theme. It is scarcely conceivable that any one could read a page taken at hazard out of the New Testament

without perceiving that the coming of Jesus Christ to save, is the message conveyed. Notwithstanding the almost countless controversies about subordinate questions which distract attention, this stands out clearly. The four Gospels give, not indeed a complete biography, but enough to show to all who will attend, what the life on earth was of Jesus Christ. The Book of the Acts relates how, after His departure from earth, the foundations of His kingdom were laid by men trained, and sent by Him, the ordinances of it prescribed, the organisation outlined. The Epistles* show how, on these foundations, the superstructure was raised, and how, through the ministrations which He had ordained, men and women were enabled to begin even here on earth their life in Him. The closing book, whatever else it may be, is a vision of this heavenly life, which He has inaugurated, under images suggested by the fiery trials of a time of persecution.

Thus, throughout the New Testament, though there is a wide diversity in the points of view, every vista converges on the Person of Jesus

* St Paul is sometimes said to have invented the doctrines of Christianity. But all his doctrinal teaching is in the Gospels in germ.

Christ. Each portion of the New Testament is only fragmentary in its presentation of Him: indeed, all the portions together are only so, for the written word has the living tradition as its complement; but every portion points surely and unmistakably to one central figure, not like a statue of man's devising, with every curve and lineament elaborated by the repeated strokes of the chisel, but with glimpses of more than human beauty and majesty for all to see who will.

That Christ Jesus is primarily and essentially what the pre-Christian portion of the Bible has to declare is not so obvious at the first glance. But whoever approaches the Old Testament, conscious of his own need of help to be freed from sin, can hardly fail to see Christ there more and more vividly, as he ponders what is written.

Nor is this tantamount to saying that the Christian faith is merely a creature of the imagination projected by hopes and fears, baseless and unreal. Something in man, his better nature, echoes the voice from heaven; but the echo cannot be without the voice that awakens it. When the landscape spreads itself before the eye, or the music strikes the

tympanum of the ear, there must be an apprehensiveness in eye, ear, brain, to take in the beauty which presents itself; but the senses and the sensorium are not creating the scenery, the sound; they are only responsive to it. When a noble action passes across the retina of a man's cognisance, he appreciates it or not according to his ability to see it as it is; but the action is there all the same, whether he admires it or not. The old saying of the Greek poet,* that the words spoken speak only to those who can understand, is for ever the burden of the cry of seer and prophet in God's revelation of Himself to man. Only those "that have ears to hear, let them hear."

The Saviour Himself has taught by His example how to understand the Old Testament. On the way to Emmaus, "He expounded" to His disciples "in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself."†

Some parts of the Old Testament speak of Christ more explicitly than others. There are passages, for instance, of Isaiah which read, it has been well said, more like history than prediction. Even when the evangelic meaning

* φωνᾶντα συνέτοισι—Pindar.

† St Luke xxiv. 27.

is not on the surface of the prophecy or psalm, it underlies the imagery. It is the longing for the Deliverer which dominates the rise and fall of the music, now plaintive, now wildly jubilant, as the seer contemplates in vision the woes or the restored prosperity of Sion. This is the key, for practical purposes, to what is otherwise undecipherable. This runs through the prophetic utterances as the clue through a maze. This again is true, as of the word written or spoken, so of the thought embodied in visible form. In what are called types of Christ, the likeness which may seem far-fetched to a careless looker-on reveals itself to those who gaze more earnestly, just as they who know and love can discern in the features of a friend a resemblance which others cannot see.

The ethical or didactic parts of the Old Testament, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job, bear their witness to the promise of Christ's coming, positively and negatively, by what they say and by what they cannot say. Their morality, sounder and purer in many ways than the morality of surrounding nations, is yet far below the law of the Gospel, the law of self-sacrifice. They show that for expediency, and if only for

the sake of good things in this life, the right course is to be preferred to the wrong. By the confession of man's ignorance and frailty if left to himself, by recognising disappointments and uncertainties which beset him in his contact with the world, they point to the coming of a Helper. In God's schooling of mankind the easier, the elementary lesson, must be mastered before the higher teaching is possible. From the lower level of prudential self-regard, man rises to self-abnegation.

St Paul has shown how those parts of the Old Testament which are, strictly speaking, the Law, are a prelude to the Gospel. This was his special mission. Himself, by idiosyncrasy and training, most expert of legalists, when once the upbraidings of conscience * had wakened in him the love of the Holy One, he saw his Saviour in the very law which a narrow formalism fancied to be the antithesis of the Gospel. What was in itself a mere routine of antiquated ceremonial, glowed for him with the fire of heavenly self-devotion, as the dry bones in the prophet's vision lived and moved, quickened by the breath from heaven.† Thus what might

* *E.g.*, Rom. vii. 24.

† Ezek. xxxvii. 10.

be wearisome and repelling, a mere string of minute, meaningless formalities,* speaks from first to last, to all who love Christ, of His pardoning, redeeming love. The doves (the thank-offering of the peasant woman), the scapegoat, carrying away into the wilderness, as if out of God's sight, the guiltiness of God's people, the gentle, unresisting lamb, "without spot or blemish," the silver bells, the purple fringe on the robe of the priest, the fragrant incense steaming up to heaven, the endless washings and rinsings, and even details less palpably significant of Christ, are all suggestive of Him, of His holiness, of His love.

Much of the Old Testament is biography, generally of some one who, when due allowance has been made for the deficiencies incidental to a pre-Christian period with its imperfect development, serves as an example to the end of time. Each has some distinguishing quality, excels in some special characteristic, all of which are consummated in Christ. The self-surrender of Abraham, the graciousness of Joseph, the patriotism of Moses, the integrity of Samuel, the piety of Hezekiah—all these, for instance, speak

* If St Paul did not write the Epistle to the Hebrews, it probably emanated from him, foremost pupil of Gamaliel.

for themselves indubitably. In characters such as these, any one who thinks about it must recognise the foreshadowing of Christ and His followers, as the ear catches far off the tread of an advancing army. Nor is it difficult to see in Achan, Ahab, Gehazi, and their fellows, that which by force of contrast throws into stronger relief "the Just One," "the Holy One," and His saints.

But the Bible would not be true to life as it is if, like some works of fiction, it exhibited only saints and sinners in deeply traced light and shade. It is the mixed characters, like Jacob and David, which are at once a stumbling-stone to a superficial reader, and in a special way eminently suggestive of Christ to those who know how weak are the best intentions without His help continually. A selfish, scheming huckster, the sceptic asks, and a voluptuous despot, why are they singled out as if under the special tutelage of Heaven? But the several careers of Jacob and David declare, as plainly as letters of fire on the wall, that wrong-doing must pay the penalty;* that even devout trustfulness

* That God visits (in this life) the sin of the parent on the children (*e.g.*, in the history of David) is surely mercy, not severity, if it deters men from sin.

and ardent generosity * are no excuse for failing in other ways; that the unerring Judge of all can discriminate, even if men cannot, between the good and the bad in one and the same personality. Thus, by the stern probation of life, God disciplines man, as a father the child whom he loves, to seek perfection where only it can be found—in Christ.

The history in the Old Testament of the chosen people can only be understood rightly in the same way. It is the training of the world for the Messiah. If it is asked, Why should one nation be picked out for this training? The only answer possible for man's very limited knowledge is, that this seems in accordance with God's method generally, Who acts individually through one or another, influencing the crowd through the select few, as if to impress on His servants their mutual obligations to one another. Similarly, the nation selected is one of small importance in comparison with greater kingdoms, because, it would seem, He would abase self-confidence and teach humility by using means which seem inadequate. Besides, it was a nation which, with all its perversities,

* A man "after God's own heart" so far, though inconsistent, in succumbing otherwise to temptation.

was pre-eminently earnest, reverent, God-fearing.

From first to last the history of the Jews in the Old Testament points to something better still to come. In their darkest days they could cling to this promise, and in their hour of triumph they had this hope to lead their aspirations upward and onward. Slaves in Egypt, wanderers in Arabia, planted in Palestine, exiles by the Great River, God was teaching them to lean not on themselves, but on Him. Too often they were stubborn and refractory, like a wayward child, slow to learn. But all the time the mystery of the Incarnation, "kept secret since the world began,"* and not even to them disclosed in its completeness, was gradually opening itself out, like a blossom ripening to maturity.

In this way the Old Testament explains itself to believers in Christ. Thus He has taught men to read it. For this purpose He cites it as bearing on Himself, His life, His mission. The Mosaic law He quotes to show that His law, though consonant with the older law, goes far beyond it. Type and prediction He quotes to show that they are fulfilled in Him. Saints

* Rom. xvi. 26.

and heroes in days past He refers to as waiting and watching for Him to come. The Apostles and their converts quote from the Old Testament in the same way. The first martyr in his dying words to his fellow-countrymen, St Peter in what has been called the first Christian sermon, St Paul in his frequent appeals to the older Scriptures—all alike make this the object of their quotations, that Jewish history before the birth of Christ was simply preliminary* to the advent of the Son of God as man, a shadow on the wall of events to come. Not the route of the Exodus, not the dimensions of the Temple, not the date, the authorship of verse and chapter, are of primary consideration, but the prefiguration of Jesus Christ our Lord. "The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life." †

The historical portions of the Old Testament are not, as Origen thought, an allegory; they are history, with an ethical and spiritual meaning, and the historical accuracy is altogether subordinate to this meaning. The Saviour quotes the Psalm ‡ to convince His

* What St Paul says of "the law" (Gal. iii. 24) is true of the Old Testament generally. It is "the servant who leads the child to the teacher, the pedagogue."

† 2 Cor. iii. 6. ‡ Ps. cx.

opponents, as from their own lips, that the Son of Man is Lord of all, whether David or another wrote the Psalm being irrelevant to this. He speaks of Jonah to illustrate to the Jews from their own books the mystery of the Resurrection, whether the narrative of Jonah is actual or parabolic. An Apostle refers to Balaam rebuked by a dumb creature to show the fearfulness of self-deceit, whether the incident was fact or vision. The safe escape of the people through the Red Sea and their victory in Ajalon * show God's power and mercy in rescuing mankind in holy baptism from their enemy, and in enabling them to overcome him in the battle of life. So St Paul uses the story of Hagar and of the water in the desert spiritually.† Hagar to him represents the bondage of the law; and "that rock was Christ." It is an artifice of the Deceiver to lure men's attention from what is

* In these and other miracles, even if the effect was produced through the action of the ordinary laws of nature (*e.g.*, "The Lord brought a strong east wind," Exod. xiv. 21), still it was miraculous, if inexplicable, to those for whose sake it was done; for a miracle is that which, by being inexplicable, excites awe and so arrests the attention, which would not be given otherwise. An event subjectively miraculous is a miracle.

† Gal. iv.; 1 Cor. x.

practically the gist of the words quoted to what is merely accessory.

The Bible, then, is above all other books in this, that it speaks, from beginning to end, of the Saviour, God for us made man. Much there is besides in the book to command admiration and reverence. It is in parts among the oldest written records of the past. It draws back the veil, which hides what is behind the affairs of men, and allows a glimpse of the plan on which these things are ordered, indicating in the lives of men and of nations not a blind, resistless fate, but a discriminating, retributive Providence. It contains passages unsurpassed and unequalled in poetry and eloquence, profoundest philosophisings, narratives thrilling with human pathos, precepts of prudence and wisdom. But all this cannot make the Bible what it is. It is a book with a meaning, and that meaning is Christ. It claims a hearing, as the utterance of God the Spirit, by the lips and pens of men, to tell a world writhing in the python-coils of evil where to find deliverance.

That the Bible speaks truly in what it says of this wonderful deliverance, and that the Incarnation which it announces is a reality, the best of all guarantees is Jesus Christ Himself.

That he was what He is described by the evangelists cannot reasonably be denied, for if other testimony were wanting, it would be testimony enough that the mind of man could not have invented One such as He, consistently perfect throughout in unalloyed unselfishness. The practical question therefore for men is, whether, He being what He is, they will yield themselves to Him in entire trustfulness or not.

To substitute the Bible for Christ as the object of the Christian's faith is idolatry. Sometimes it seems to be thought that Christians believe in Jesus Christ because they read of Him in the Bible, and consequently that any difficulty about anything in the Bible must shake faith in Christ. It is nearer the truth that Christians believe in the Bible because they find Him there. The word to Christian converts in the beginning was not, "Believe in a book," but "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ."* So in the baptismal covenant the Christian promises to believe "all the articles of the Christian faith"† (the Apostles' Creed); and coming to the Holy Communion, he renews the profession of his faith in the words of Nicæa and Constantinople.

* *E.g.*, Acts viii. 37. † The Catechism.

The message* of forgiveness is spoken day by day in church to those "who believe in Christ's holy gospel."

Unexceptionable proof of Christianity is out of the question; for that would be demonstration, as in a proposition of Euclid or in the multiplication table. There would then be no such thing as faith. For faith is trust in a person worthy to be trusted; and this trusting follows, no other impediment intervening, on our sympathy going with what deserves it. Infallibility, could it be found anywhere, would save all trouble by precluding all doubt. But in the process it would destroy that, which is not merely the test of moral excellence, but the training for it. We may, if we please, make to ourselves a pontiff who cannot err, or a book in which every syllable and letter have been shaped mechanically by the finger of God. But this would be to get rid of more than half of men's earthly probation. Even so the dilemma arises, on what is this assumed infallibility to rest? It is the old story of the world resting on the elephant, and the elephant on the tortoise, and the tortoise on space. Infallibility is a drug to silence the questionings, which ought not to

* The Prayer Book—Morning and Evening Prayer.

be stifled, but to be faced fairly and wisely as an integral part of man's responsibility to heaven. When once a man can say with St Paul, of the Crucified One, "I know whom I have believed," * and "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, . . . nor any other creature can separate me from His love," † then difficulties in the revelation no longer terrify. A robust and healthy faith, instead of trying to evade them, to gloss them over, to explain them away, accepts them as for the present insoluble, simply because the trust in Christ Jesus outweighs their apparent incredibility, just as with those who really trust a friend all misgivings vanish in his presence.

About the swine in Gadara,‡ for instance, a Christian, if perplexed by the incident, is content to wait for an explanation till "the shadows shall flee away" and he "shall know even as he is known"; and when once a man really believes that Jesus Christ is God made man, then the authoritative teaching of His Apostles, embodied in creeds and sacraments, should be accepted as coming from Him, who is the Truth, in accordance with His parting promises to His Church.

* 2 Tim. i. 12. † Rom. viii. 38, 39.

‡ St Luke viii. 32. The late Professor Huxley found this a difficulty.

Similarly, out of this belief, that it is indeed God the Son who came to save, should flow, practically, lifelong obedience. His precepts, His example, should be the rule of conduct. If God has indeed identified Himself with man, then man by the aid of the Holy Spirit is to be godlike, is to act, desire, think, as Christ would in any contingency, is to be the dutiful child of the Father in heaven as was Christ on earth. In finding Jesus Christ in the Bible, the Christian finds the foundation of his rule of faith and of his rule of life.

The Bible is the announcement of the Incarnation.

CHAPTER VII

THE PSALMS AND CHRISTIANITY

"I never sing that song, Sir Knight,
But to those who sail with me."
—TRENCH, *from the Spanish.*

Is the Christian use of the old Hebrew Psalter affected by the researches and discoveries of modern criticism? Is the Church right in continuing, as in time past, to apply the Psalms in a Christian sense to the fasts and festivals of the Christian year, to the trials or vicissitudes of the Christian life? Is the Christian doxology, said or sung at the close of each Psalm, still appropriate, or is it meaningless?

Possibly some even of those who would not hesitate to reply that the Christian faith is not affected by modern science in any shape, because the foundations of it lie too deep to be stirred by the ruffling of the surface waters, may yet hesitate to say that the Christian use

of the Hagiographa stands where it stood a century ago.

Cordial thanks are due from all who prize the Christian faith to the students who work at these investigations about the Old and New Testaments. For exactness and accuracy are things to be desired by all lovers of truth. Just as to the naturalist the shapings and shadings of a beetle's wing are not to be despised, so in Hebrew archæology even minutiæ, such as the exact spelling of a name or the precise date of a battle, are worth ascertaining, if possible. But there is a proportion to be observed—a difference between what is essential to the main purpose of a book and what is not.

No thoughtful Christian can disparage the value of research, historic and linguistic, into the original meaning of the Psalms. Any one, wishing to understand them devotionally and spiritually may be helped much by learning what was the first occasion of the words. In this way a flood of light streams on dark places. Only, what is of secondary importance must not thrust itself into the highest place. The reference of the words, when first uttered, to a particular framework of circumstances, is quite subordinate to the message which they

bring to the conscience of mankind always and everywhere. That the Psalmist, whoever he was, cursed his personal or national enemies, need not concern those who know that their "battle of life" is against the powers of evil in the world.

If the Bible is, essentially, the revelation in Christ of God to man and of man to himself, if the value of the older books in the Bible is to reveal Christ proleptically, as it is of the newer books that they reveal Him historically, then the result of many learned disquisitions which we owe to what is called the "Higher Criticism" is quite irrelevant to the faith and hope of Christians in this life and for ever. For all practical purposes, as regards the helpfulness of the Psalms to beings passing through time into eternity, questions of date and authorship are beside the mark. Though one speaks of the "Psalms of David," as did the Jews in our Lord's time, no one seriously maintains that David wrote them all, just as it is impossible that Moses or Samuel penned the narrative of his own obsequies. But if the Psalms are indeed the record of devout communings with the Unseen, if they are the voice of God the Spirit to the soul and man's response, what can

it matter, in that aspect, in what year or from whose lips the Psalm first came into being?

The great Psalm of obedience, the 119th, is what it is to the believer, whether composed by David at Nob while he hid himself among the priests from the fury of Saul, or by the restored of God's people after the stern and sad experiences in Babylon. In the same way, it cannot concern Christians, except as a "curiosity of literature," what may have been the particular occasion which gave birth to this or that Psalm, in the history of the Jews. Was it some victory won, some triumphal pageant? With the reflex light streaming on it from the Gospel, it is the triumph of Christ for our sake over sin and death. Was it some magnificent Oriental wedding? It speaks of Christ the Bridegroom and the Church, the soul, His bride—"the King's daughter all glorious within." Is it a nation's supplication in dejection and misery, as the *De Profundis?* It becomes for Christians the cry of those who are tempted, a cry as from out of deep waters, a cry for help whence alone it can come. The 51st Psalm is our Lenten hymn of penitence, whether or not it was King David's *Peccavi;* the 23rd expresses a Christian's reliance on the

Saviour, whether or not it was sung on the plain of Bethlehem by the shepherd boy, Jesse's youngest son. The singularly beautiful Psalms which follow the 119th, the Gradual Psalms, were they the songs of the exiles as they marched in long procession back to their own land, or hymns of priests and Levites going up the white marble steps to the Temple on Mount Sion? This matters not—these Psalms are a "Pilgrim's Progress" for all ages. Even the 110th Psalm, wrangled about so often and so hotly among those who should rather see Christ there on their knees, is no exception to the rule, that archæological details are irrelevant to the Christian faith. To the Son of Man, in His loving self-humiliation for men, the Psalm was "David's," as it was to those among whom He deigned to cast His lot for a time. The scope and meaning of His words are not hinged on the literary question of its authorship. The mystery of the Incarnation is enshrined in the opening words of the Psalm, whoever wrote it: "The Son of Man" is the "Lord of Man," for He is God made Man.

Nor has the intention * of the Psalmist any-

* Dr Cheyne's *The Christian Use of the Psalms*. Subsequent references are to this learned treatise.

thing to do with the Christian's application of the words to himself and to his own surroundings. Οὐδὲν πρὸς Διονύσον. There are few thoughtful students of the Bible now who would affirm that there was a conscious intention of foretelling the coming of the Messiah in the mind of the Psalmist, whoever he was, whenever his words speak of Christ. The mechanical explanation of the prophecy is passing away, if indeed it has not practically passed away already. Similarly, in regard to human laws and ordinances, it is not what was the intention of the legislator, perhaps in a very remote past, but what is now the *animus imponentis* which concerns those who wish to keep the law or the rubric. What the words of a Psalm may have been originally intended to say, and whether it is to be labelled "Messianic" or not, are questions for the archæologist. What the words actually say to English people in this twentieth century is a question for them of life and conduct. It is by God's good providence the words say to each who hears them what they say.

In one of the Psalms quoted already, the 110th, the Psalmist evidently speaks of a victorious army on its march:—"He shall drink of the brook in the way; therefore shall

he lift up his head." To a believer in Christ the words suggest the refreshing influence of the Holy Spirit bestowed on Christ and on His followers in the weary conflict with evil. The 19th Psalm praises the glory of the sun in the sky; to the Christian it speaks, also, of Christ, the "Sun of the soul." Addison's metrical paraphrase of the 23rd Psalm, made when he was crossing the mountains of Savoy, rightly brings out the Christian significance latent in the old Hebrew poem. The never-ceasing conflict between good and evil pervades the Psalter from end to end. "Pharaoh" may be a Rameses or some one else; that is for archæology to decide; anyhow, for practical purposes, he stands for the powers of evil, to all who read below the surface; the conqueror may be Joshua or a Maccabee: at any rate, He is Christ, the Saviour and King.

The arbitrary assertion that "allegory has no place" in poems such as the Psalms, and that the 145th Psalm cannot be at once a prophecy of Jesus Christ and a eulogy of a contemporary earthly king, forgets the essential duality of things, the analogy between visible and invisible, transient and lasting, "the letter and the spirit." In Moore's exquisite song, "When he who

adores thee has left but a name," a personal affection is not of necessity excluded, because his "emerald isle" is all the time in the poet's eye. The heart-piercing wail of the opening verses of the Lamentations calls up at one and the same time, to a Christian, the sorrows of Jerusalem, of Christ, of His Church. The researches of criticism may make it probable that this or that Psalm has a reference to "poor and righteous Jews in post-exilic times," and that the Psalmist is often the mouthpiece of his fellow-countrymen; but all this, if proved, cannot make the Psalm any the less the expression of the aspirations of the Gospel for all time and for all people. The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah speaks, perhaps, of many other persons and things, but paramountly it speaks of Christ bearing our sins.

The question whether or not the English versions of the Psalter, authorised or revised, translate the words precisely, is of less moment. Granted that here and there inexactness can be detected, the evil of tampering with a time-honoured phraseology, endeared by kindly associations (as Matthew Arnold urged in defence of the old translation of Isaiah) must be taken into account, unless, indeed, the mistake is flagrant, as in Isaiah (ix. 2), "Thou hast *not*

increased the joy." Is anything gained in substituting "Yahwe" for "Jehovah," "baggage-waggons" for "chariots"; "human creature" for "man"? Sometimes, as in Psalms xix., xxi., lv., the new translation offered is so very near the old as to be superfluous. To alter for altering's sake is plainly indefensible. Obvious defects, of course, should be amended, for the sake, especially, of those whose spiritual life is fostered by the devotional use of the Psalms. Beautiful as is the Prayer-book version, it contains passages unintelligible.

The imperfect morality of the Psalm is a more serious difficulty. Are the Psalms which are "imprecatory," the Psalms of cursing, really proper for a Christian congregation, or for the private devotions of a Christian? The answer is twofold. First, it must be remembered that the light from heaven dawned gradually on mankind till the "fulness of time," when Christ came, and that the ages before His coming, even among His chosen people, were simply a preparation. This exculpates the original purport of the Maledictions. But, as has been said already, what concerns the Christian is the practical, spiritual, real meaning for him of the Psalms. These imprecations, which strike the hearer as alto-

gether alien from the spirit of Christ, express detestation and abhorrence, not of any mortal foes, but of the spirits that tempt him from God. In this sense, the execrations cannot be too fierce, too pitiless. "Ye that love the Lord, see that ye hate the thing that is evil." In like manner the sceptical, even despairing, tone of some Psalms as to a future life unfits them not for those who believe in a risen Christ, and in a future Resurrection, for "life and immortality" came with His coming, not before it.

This again justifies the description in the Psalms of the Saviour as a terrible One, who shall rule with a "rod of iron," and dash His enemies "in pieces, like a potter's vessel" (Ps. ii.). The latter verses of Psalm xl. are said to be such that they cannot be read or sung in church "without an inward protest." But even in the announcement of the "glad tidings," even in the pages of the New Testament, "the wrath of the Lamb" is spoken of as terrible to the impenitent; and wherever there is in a man the conviction of his own sinfulness and weakness in God's sight, words like these come home to the conscience piercingly.

Again, how can a Christian use Psalms, it is asked, in which the Psalmist speaks of

himself as sinless before God? "I was uncorrupt (for instance) before Thee"; "Thou shalt find no wickedness in me." Because through the marvellous condescension of the Son of God in the Incarnation a Christian is identified with the sinless Son of Man, and in Him the believer is accepted. Thus, in the same Psalm there is in one verse absolute contrition for guiltiness, in another the absolute forgiveness which, through repentance, faith, and love, cleanses the sinner that he may be "whiter than snow." Only they can really understand the Psalms who know and are ready to acknowledge their own faults and follies. It is a forgetfulness of the strange complexities of our nature which is startled by these apparently jarring sentiments or regards these pathetic confessions of unworthiness as "very unsuitable for an ordinary individual."

"Those who seek shall find." When there is real contrition, real longing for holiness, there the Christ of prophecy reveals Himself in the Psalms, while He is of necessity hidden from the self-satisfied complacency which seeks Him not there. As the writer already referred to says very beautifully, it is—

"The absorption of a lover in his beloved. Wherever he goes he sees something to remind him of her; he hears her name in the whisper of the breeze, and he sees her beauty in the flowers. Just so this lover of Jesus sees His name or some feature of His life wherever he looks in His Bible. And we, too, if we are lovers of Jesus shall look for . . . some anticipation of His heavenly ideal in the best of the pages of the Old Testament. We look, and we venture to believe that, thanks in part at least to the new critical exegesis, we find what we seek."

As for the traditional assignment of certain proper Psalms to particular days in the Christian year, it would not be easy, notwithstanding all that the author of *The Christian Use of the Psalms* has written against it, to substitute a better. Perhaps some day, as Sir William Muir suggested some years ago in an interesting pamphlet, the principle of selecting certain Psalms as appropriate for certain seasons may be extended to the various fasts and festivals generally.

CHAPTER VIII

CONFESSIO CREDENTIS

Πιστεύω, κύριε· βοηθεῖ Συ τῇ ἐμῇ ἀπιστίᾳ.

AWAY from controversy, in the near presence of death, one asks oneself, "Why am I a Christian?" Conventional phrases fall away as leaves in frost, with all that is superficial and adventitious. Only what is intrinsic remains, what has been assimilated and made one's own by experience.

It may be worth while to try to set forth plainly what is the essential character of our faith, and on what foundation it rests really: for, both in attacking and defending Christianity, there is sometimes a kind of unreality from the non-observance of proportion; too often the attention, which should be concentrated on what is vital, is distracted by what are comparatively irrelevancies.

There is no need to go behind the generally acknowledged phenomena of consciousness. It may be taken as granted, that there is a right and a wrong morally; that in believing the intellect assents, but that this assent is sterile and inoperative without the concurrence of our emotive being, and unless ratified by the will; and that in the action of the Will, the Holy Spirit, unless we reject His aid, assists our spirit to decide rightly.

I trust the Christ because I know of none, nor can imagine any, approaching Him in goodness. As portrayed in the New Testament, as Man, He is not only more true, more kind, more pure than others, but absolutely true, kind, pure; not merely more unselfish than others, but absolutely unselfish. Therefore, as I trust my fellow-man who proves himself trustworthy, even though he may be not without fault, much more I trust One who is transcendant in holiness. Even were research not able to assure me that the record of His life is authentic, still I should be sure that such a character could not be invented. It would be inconceivable, had it not been. Because He is sinless, therefore it cannot be but that He must rise from the grave; He is

too "holy" to "see corruption"; Death can have "no dominion over Him." Because He is sinless, His personal unity with the Father and the Holy Spirit was never interrupted, and He could do wonders. Because He is sinless, only they could see Him risen and glorified who had a longing for holiness. Because He is sinless, I can believe that He was born supernaturally. Therefore this spotless holiness of the Man constrains my assent to His claim to be the Son of God, and I can trust everything to Him. On "this rock" my faith rests. "Other foundation can no man lay." His sinlessness is "the corner stone" of the temple. He is "the Way, the Truth, the Life." I am a Christian because I believe in Christ.

So far this is assent in the abstract. But conscience, aware of inherent pravity, seeking to be set free from it, responds to Him as the perfect example, teaching by word and deed, and, which is far better, as identifying Himself with me, that He may suffer with me and for me, and identifying me with Himself, that He may impart to me His heavenliness; by this identification taking our mortal nature, giving His immortal. A Jew, proud, prejudiced, ambitious, but with a latent longing for some-

thing better, saw in the graciousness of a young Christian martyr a reflection of heavenly lineaments. Longing to be saved from himself, he became the foremost champion of the faith which he had persecuted, and gave up all that he had lived for to give himself to Christ, staking everything on his personal faith in the Person of Christ. Unless in me, as in St Paul, there is sorrow, not simply for the consequences of sin but for the sin, "there is no beauty in Christ that I should desire Him." But if I find in Him alone all that my conscience tells me that I should aim at becoming, and if I find in Him alone, for His sufferings are a gauge of His love, free and full forgiveness, then the heart and the will consent to the judgment of the reason. "Whom have I in Heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee." He has died for me, and for me He lives for ever.

Thus faith in Christ is, intrinsically, the surrender of Self to Him, come what may, because He is what He is. But there is much to corroborate my trust in Him. Prophecies which have been accomplished in Him, acts of beneficence in Him evincing a power inexplicable, the unselfish morality of the Gospel,

the adaptability of the Gospel to all natures and circumstances, the ameliorating tendencies of the Gospel where it has free play, the unexampled progress of Christianity among the foremost races of the world, in spite of the terrible inconsistencies of Christians; above all, the testimony of Christians without number, who have found in Christ a peace which nothing else could give—all these combine cumulatively to deepen my trust in Him. "I know in whom I have believed."

The Bible tells me of Christ. It is the gradual unfolding of the Divine purpose, "at sundry times and in divers manners," till in "the fullness of time" the Son of God comes. The light widens and deepens till "the Sun of righteousness" arises, "the true Light," "the Light of the world." The Bible shows the preparation of the world for the Birth in Bethlehem, shows the results which have flowed from that event. It speaks of Christ directly, implicitly, in anticipation, in retrospect. Even passages which seem less spiritual than others, as the history of wars between Israel and Judah, are parabolic to a thoughtful mind of man's unceasing warfare with evil, and display God's overruling Providence preparing the world.

In the Bible God reveals Himself, not merely as we guess of Him in nature, but explicitly, so far as we can bear it. I do not go to the Bible to learn geology, nor astronomy, nor whatever else can be learnt otherwise, but to learn about God and my self.

The difficulties in the Bible I need not be careful to have solved. The attempt to solve them may be interesting and, sometimes, successful. But difficulties are to be expected in a revelation of truths which transcend our faculties. Were there no difficulties in believing, faith would not be exercised fully. If I really trust Christ, Biblical difficulties (for instance, about the Gadarenes, and the swine) dwindle into insignificance. What I seek and find in the Scriptures, in a way not possible otherwise, is to know God revealing Himself in Christ, and to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking even to me.

There cannot be contradiction between the real discoveries of science * and the real meaning of revelation. Each must be true, and yet the manner of reconciling them may never be found out in this life. We "know in part"; we "see

* This is well enforced in Illingworth's *Reason and Revelation.*

through a glass darkly"; we cannot pour the ocean into a little hole in the sand; we can wait. Often the attempt to dovetail science and revelation into one another is premature, and has to be made over again. Science has not said her last word; those who quote the Bible against a scientific proposition are often, like the opponents of Galileo, fighting for their own figments, not for a revealed truth. Evolution illustrates the divine prescience more fully than older notions about the creation. The law of gravitation and the law of right and wrong in conduct are both verities; but they are apprehended through processes distinct though analogous; they touch us on different sides of our nature. Religion assures us, what science intimates, that we are not orphans. Christ emboldens us to say, with a promise of being heard, "Abba, Father;" "Our Father, which art in heaven."

The Church, by the appointment of Christ, through the ages hands down to me the Scriptures, which tell me of Him, and relates how they have been understood by the faithful from the beginning. The Church has "kept" all "the sayings" and doings of her Lord and "pondered them in her heart." That cannot be the right interpretation which is partial in

any way—historically, in time or place, or substantially, by not taking in the whole scope of what is written. If it can be proved of any doctrine that it has not been existent throughout Christendom at any period,* or that it has been non-existent from the beginning in any part of Christendom, or that it involves the rejection of any other received doctrine, this doctrine cannot claim adhesion. The Church is a finger-post, where truth and error diverge. Had we the infallible guidance which we are apt to sigh for, faith, hope, and love would be without the ordeal which makes them perfect. We should be under compulsion to believe. If we love our King we love the kingdom which He has founded among men, "the city of our God," the heavenly Sion. It has four special characteristics, "apostolic doctrine, apostolic fellowship, the breaking of the bread, and the prayers."†

The earliest Christian creed is, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." The Ethiopian's profession of faith contained the creeds of the Church in germ. In Christ we have access to the Father by the Spirit; for "in

* "Quod semper, [aut] ubique, [aut] ab omnibus." The Lerinensian test. † Acts ii. 42.

Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily"; nor "knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him"; nor "hath any man seen God at any time: the Only Begotten Son of the Father He hath declared Him"; and, if we believe in Him, we accept thankfully from Him the two great ordinances which He has bequeathed to His people, with all the truths which have fallen from His lips or which He communicated to His Apostles. Nothing which comes from Him can be unimportant. The devout believer endeavours "to fulfil all righteousness" in doctrine as in practice. But there is a hierarchy in these teachings; some are in their essence more life-giving than others. There must always be a subjective difference in the manner in which a truth presents itself to this or that person; even as no two persons see the same object precisely. The more mysterious the doctrine, the greater is the irreverence of an individual dogmatising about it. But to think slightly of Christian doctrine is to disparage Him whence it emanates. If I love Christ, I must "contend earnestly for the faith once [for all] delivered to the saints." Wilful indifference or perversity in regard to doctrine lead to indifference or perversity in practice.

None is handicapped "in running the race set before us." Earthly distinctions vanish in Christ; in Him there is neither learned nor unlearned. The peasant or the child who yields himself to Him, by the very act accepts implicitly what the theologian accepts explicitly. They have "done what they could"; they are responsible for "what they have, not for what they have not." Faith, hope, charity, are independent of the inequalities of mental equipment: these inequalities are not the person, but the dress which he wears. Those who have never heard of Christ, or, hearing of Him, are kept away from Him by accidents, in them or round them, which they cannot control, may be Christians in God's sight, potentially and virtually though not actually. Nothing can "separate us from the love of Christ" but our deliberate rejection of Him with our eyes open. Then we thrust away from us His saving Arm.*

Is it sin to refuse to believe in Christ? If faith in Christ means the surrender of Self to Him, because in Him, as Man, is personified all that is worthiest of love and reverence, then "whatsoever is" by choice "not of faith is sin"; for "he that is of God heareth God's

* G. Herbert.

words." But "I will *not* believe is quite another thing from I *cannot*." If I refuse to believe in Him, because I am biassed by unworthy motives; because I prefer following my own wilfulness to obeying His law; because I love my own gratification more than His "beauty of holiness," "darkness rather than light"; because I admire myself so blindly and trust so proudly in myself that I will not try to "bring every thought into subjection to the law of Christ"; because I think that I "have no need of a Physician," a Saviour; because I am self-willed, self-righteous, self-seeking—then my unbelief in Him is sin. If I would believe but am hindered by impediments insurmountable; if I long for holiness though I am unable from one cause or another, not of my own making, to recognise that perfect holiness is in Christ only; if I am steadfast in self-renunciation for others, even though I fail to see that perfect self-sacrifice is only to be found on Calvary—then surely the will is taken for the deed, and such an unbeliever is nearer to Christ and "to the Kingdom of Heaven" than many a nominal Christian.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

MYSTICISM AND MORALITY

THE Bampton Lectures of 1899 are one of the few books that are really epoch-making. England has been rich in Christian mystics of the best sort, particularly at Cambridge in the eighteenth century. But never before have we had in England a survey of the whole subject from first to last so exhaustive, so discriminating. Mr Inge* distinguishes the healthy mysticism from its parhelion, the ravings and drivellings of the morbid mystic. Sympathising reverently with the devotional ardour and heavenly musings of the true mystic, he is none the less keenly aware of the perils that environ the mystic; for the old saying about the hermits of the Thebaid holds good of the mystic, "*Aut deus, aut bellua.*" Mysticism is a timely antidote (as Mr Inge says) to the arid Positivism which threatens to make life a desert of Sahara.

There are two lines of thought, in connection with this subject, which need to be emphasised, both starting from psychology, both converging by routes distinct.

* *Christian Mysticism.* The Bampton Lectures, 1899. By William Ralph Inge, M.A., etc., etc. Methuen & Co.

Mysticism is not synonymous with holiness. Its holy raptures are an accident of religion, not the essence of it. They come from a peculiar temperament, an idiosyncratic commixture of the diverse elements which constitute our being. It is not given to every saint to see in thought what George Fox and Sister Theresa believed that they saw. Yet a child, an illiterate peasant, a person to whom Wordsworth's magnificent poem on *Tintern Abbey* is nothing, may enjoy the bliss of union with God through Christ, which is the foretaste of heaven, if only they surrender their will to Him. The nearness and closeness to God, indicated in the promise, "The pure in heart shall see God," must not be confounded with (for it may well be apart from it and independent of it) the conscious vision of God, the "beatific vision," which solaces and delights the true mystic now and here. All this is implied in the Lectures. Perhaps Mr Inge would say, that there is no necessity to express it categorically.

The other point is almost, if not quite, of equal importance. Here, too, the lecturer can reply, that it is by no means omitted, nay, that substantially it is recognised through the Lectures from beginning to end. Certainly he affirms plainly that Mysticism of the right type is reasonable; that, far from controverting the laws of our reason, it moves in conformity with them; that, as St Paul teaches about worship, the mystic must see "with the understanding also." It would be deeply interesting, if one who has gained so remarkable a mastery of his subject, would trace by analysis the process by which our reason, the same faculty surely, by which we note the

common things of daily life, can soar so high in its eagle flight, undazzled by the sun. If we call in to aid us "intuition," or any other supposed faculty devised to meet the occasion, we are grasping at shadow. Granting that imagination is the synthesis, the co-ordination of our rational and emotional faculties, may we not say that a highly sensitive imaginativeness, guided by a purified, self-renouncing Will, is what we mean by "mysticism" in the right sense of the word? Just as our highest and best affections, rising from the appreciation of what is worthy of love and reverence in our fellows to find their home through Christ in God, have their birth in the likes and dislikes of childhood, so the grandest and most heavenly conceptions of the intellect spring embrionically from the perceptions of sense. The transcendental is the development, the evolution of what is very simple. Religion is reasonable, if He, through whom we have the revelation, is trustworthy, though it points the way to mysteries which transcend reason. St Paul sums up the reasonableness of the Gospel thus: "I know in whom I have believed."

APPENDIX B

MIRACLES

"Omnia portenta contra naturam dicimus esse. Sed non sunt Quomodo est enim 'contra naturam' quod Dei fit voluntate, quum voluntas tanti utique Conditoris conditæ rei cujusque natura sit? Portentum ergo fit, *non contra naturam, sed contra eam quæ est nota natura.*"—*De Civ. Dei*, xxi. 8.

"It seems more and more likely, that we have before "us a period of controversy which will centre, not merely "about historic incidents, like the Virgin Birth or the "Resurrection, but about the actual nature of the Person "of Christ Himself. But if the battles of Nicæa and "Chalcedon have to be fought over again, we shall have "the advantage of the experience of fifteen centuries more "of Christian life and faith. And the issue is not "doubtful for us.

"1 Cor. xv. 47 speaks of Christ as 'the Lord from "heaven.' 2 Cor. viii. 9 tells us that He was 'rich,' before "He became 'poor' for our sakes. Now this cannot be "predicated of any period of His earthly life; and hence "we have passages in the earlier and undisputed Epistles of "Paul which coincide with the teaching of the later Epistles

"of the Imprisonment, and even anticipate the fullness of "the Johannine doctrine. I venture to think that these two "passages may well be set over against the silence of the "Synoptic Gospels on the subject of His pre-existence, "and show that it was no mere after-thought of St John, "or even of St Paul's later days."

REV. W. SUMMERS.

THE RESURRECTION

THE spiritual Body of the Risen Christ cannot be apprehended by the senses. The words spoken to St Thomas ("Reach hither thy hand," etc.) are as truly part of the heavenly vision as the words spoken to Saul of Tarsus, as he rode to Damascus.

There must be in the beholder a capacity for seeing. To see the Risen Christ there must be that appreciation of holiness, by which the Will surrenders itself to Him. The Will, able to control in some degree the action even of the senses, is far more potent in controlling the imagination.

But to say that the vision is subjective, is not to say that it is unreal. The spiritual is more real than the material. The black dogs seen by the mind's eye in *delirium tremens*, or the ghost imagined by the frightened child, are unreal, because they are the product of a morbid conception. The vision of the Resurrection

Christ is real, because there is in the beholder a sane conception of the holiness which cannot die. The revelation is part of the mystery of the Incarnation.

"Although it was the very Body which was laid in the grave, yet it was not raised the same Body, it having undergone the change which we await when the 'sons of God,' who are now subject to the conditions of time and space, shall be relieved of this humiliation, and the sense-perception of phenomena shall give place to the more immediate knowledge which is by the spirit. The phenomenal is temporal; what remains after the veil of illusion has been rent in twain is the only reality. But when reality presents itself to the spirit, sense and perception clothe it in the garb of the phenomenal. Hence, when the Risen Lord in all the reality of His Spiritual Being appeared to His disciples, they saw Him 'flesh and bone,' 'the same Jesus.'"

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